

Workers power

STALINISM IN CRISIS

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British section of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International

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the links!*

USSR & EASTERN EUROPE

FOR WORKERS' SOLIDARITY

WHEN THE Vorkuta miners went on strike last December the US ambassador to Moscow had the cheek to deliver a message of support from that well known friend of the workers—George Bush.

Throughout Eastern Europe and the USSR workers are being targeted by western politicians anxious to introduce their type of politics in these countries. Social democratic leaders and right wing trade unionists have a particularly high profile as they seek to fashion the re-emerging labour movements in their image.

What is at stake, after decades of repression in the name of "socialism", is whether the new opposition will be mis-led in the direction of social democracy and the market, or alternatively the basis established for an authentic Marxist workers' movement. Revolutionary Marxists cannot abstain from this crucial historic battle.

International solidarity with the workers of the Eastern Bloc is an obligation for all socialists. Firstly we must resolutely back them in their struggle against bureaucratic repression, whatever form it takes.



Secondly, while we reject the claim that the bureaucratic planned economies are "socialist", we must take the argument about what the market means to those workers who are in danger of becoming its victims. We must document the nightmare of poverty, unemployment and inequality that the free market means for the world's working class, especially in the semi-colonial world.

We must do this in a conscious battle to win the argument for revolutionary Marxism internationally. Politics, like nature, abhors a vacuum. If we do not step in to argue for our politics in

international solidarity work, then it will be the ideas of right wing labourism and worse, that shape the reformed workers' movements of the Eastern Bloc.

This is particularly the case given that "left" labour leaders have all too often been craven supporters of the East European regimes. The task now is to organise to get the voice of the newly emerging left and independent workers' movements heard as widely as possible in the western labour movement.

At the same time we must ensure that the lessons of class struggle in the west

are taken to the workers of the Eastern Bloc. This is the way to prove in practice that George Bush, Margaret Thatcher, right wing trade union leaders and social democrats, whatever they may say, are not the allies of the Eastern Bloc workers.

Some small steps have been taken, but there is much more to do. The Campaign for Solidarity with Workers in the Eastern Bloc held a well attended conference at the end of January. The voice of the new left in Poland, the GDR and Czechoslovakia was heard. This must be-

come the springboard for a delegate based campaign that sets as its task the mobilisation of the maximum solidarity in the labour movement.

A speaking tour in February has been organised for the nucleus of Soviet trade unionists who consider themselves to be socialist—Sotsprof. A larger tour is planned for March. These tours must be given maximum support. Representative committees of all bodies supporting the tour should be formed nationally and in the localities.

At present its organisation is exclusive, limited to a few individuals from the SWP and the Socialist Movement, responsible to no-one.

It would be a scandal if the interests of particular parties or organisations were put before the tasks of building the broadest campaign in the labour and trade union movement. This would be true sectarianism.

There is no time to lose. Throughout the Eastern Bloc the workers are once again beginning to assert themselves. They have got to hear the message loud and clear:

Their real ally in the fight against bureaucrat and capitalist alike is the international working class. ■

SOTSPROF TOUR

Meetings are to be arranged in the following towns

LONDON
12 February

MANCHESTER
13 February

LIVERPOOL
14 February

SHEFFIELD
15 February

BIRMINGHAM
16 February

LONDON
17-21 February

Trade unionists interested in organising or going to a meeting should phone John Rose on (01) 538 5821

Defend the clinics

A WOMAN'S right to choose is not just about having abortions. Avoiding pregnancy, planning pregnancies and good health care for those who are having babies are all part of that choice. That means good services. And that means money.

Family planning clinics, where women can get advice about contraception, abortion, infertility, and prevention of HIV are essential. Many women do not wish to go to their GP on such matters. GPs often provide a very partial and inadequate service. Women who go to their GP requesting contraception are likely to be put on the pill without any discussion of alternative methods which may suit them better. The Department of Health pays lip service to the need for a range of services:

"The government's policy is that people should be free to choose their source of family planning advice. We have asked the health authorities to strike a balance between services provided by specialist clinics and those provided by GPs." (DHSS statement July 1988)

Over the last four years 25% of District Health Authorities (DHA) have made, or are planning to make, cuts in their family planning services, according to the Family Planning Association. Many DHAs are cutting the more specialised services such as psycho-sexual counselling and infertility advice, and others are restricting the use of the service to women who live within their area. For women who work in central London but live out in the home counties this reduces their access to clinics considerably.

Cash crises

DHAs have cut family planning services as part of their attempt to deal with cash crises. They are prompted to do this by the fact that these services are theoretically available elsewhere, namely through GPs. And as GPs get their funding for family planning from a different central government source, the DHA makes savings.

Even in cash terms this doesn't make sense. Providing contraceptive services through GPs costs much more. The cost of prescribing the pill from a clinic is £14.40 (supplies and administration costs); from a GP it is £23.89. With GPs putting everyone on the pill rather than offering cheaper, and for many women safer, alternatives, the costs rise still further.

The reduction in choice and availability of contraceptive services is likely to lead to an increase in unplanned pregnancies. Young women are especially at risk. Between 1983 and 1986 teenage conception rates in England and Wales (births and terminations) rose by 11.25%, following ten years of steady decline. Combined with reduced abortion facilities in the NHS this is likely to result in increasing numbers of unwanted babies.

Surely Margaret Thatcher would be sympathetic to women who wish to choose where to go for their services—it would seem to fit in with the White Paper which claims that patient choice will stimulate competition within the NHS. On a

BY BERNADETTE PETERS

visit to the Margaret Pyke Centre (a large family planning clinic in Bloomsbury, attached to the Soho Women's Hospital) in November 1988 she reassured us:

"It is very important that in these problems women know that there is somewhere they can go to get highly professional advice, not only professional advice, but sympathetic advice which will actually tackle their problems... I thank you for the work you are doing. It is important and it must give you great satisfaction. I have just come along to applaud your efforts and say a very big thank you and urge others to help you to continue your extremely important role."

The Soho Hospital closed two weeks later. This was followed by further cuts of £61,000 at the Brooke Advisory Centre, which provides a specialised service for young women. The Covent Garden Clinic lost 75% of its sessions. One of these axed sessions was for women from ethnic minorities, another group of women who need more not less services. Much for Thatcher's applause!

These figures are repeated throughout the country. Nottingham proposes reducing family planning and cervical screening services by 28%, including a 90% cut in sterilisations, pushing this service into the private sector.

As always, women with money will have choice. They can go through BUPA, or to the luxurious private hospitals that are springing up around the country. But for the rest of us, the few remaining family planning clinics, usually in the dingiest basements of old schools or hospitals, or in an un-sympathetic GP's surgery will have to do.

Many campaigns and activists have concentrated their energies in fighting solely on abortion rights. But these cuts in family planning clinics will potentially have a much more wide-ranging impact on women's choice. It is essential that we link these issues to the growing campaign against the Embryo Bill amendments. ■

FOOTBALL IDENTITY cards and the national membership scheme proposed by the Tories are now unlikely to be introduced. This is not the result of a new found concern for democratic rights by Thatcher. She would dearly love to curb the liberties of working class people—through government spying, bureaucratic regulations and police harassment of football fans.

Justice Taylor's report into the Hillsborough tragedy last year, when 95 people were crushed to death at a football match, has prompted the Tory retreat. The report states that ID cards would increase the likelihood of further such tragedies occurring. In these circumstances Thatcher knows that if she went ahead with her pet scheme she would risk losing a lot of votes.

But before fans start celebrating they need to take a close look at the Taylor Report. It is certainly not a democratic charter for the game. Key proposals include a whole series of other anti-democratic measures, such as electronic tagging of fans, vetting procedures and match day curfews on convicted "hooligans". The police are going to be given even more powers to bully people attending football matches. If none of this satisfies the police then the ID card proposals could

SOME OF the campaigners against the Embryo Bill and its amendments have got themselves in a right pickle. Lord Houghton has introduced a bill into the House of Lords to reduce the upper time limit for abortions, on anything other than "medical grounds", to 24 weeks.

The Stop the Amendment Campaign is opposed to the Houghton Bill, but some of its members have argued that we should actually support the Bill as a damage limitation tactic. They suggest that if his Bill were passed, then there would be far less chance of a successful amendment to the Embryo Bill reducing the time limit even further. Of course the upper time limit would go down.

Of course some women would lose the right to abortion. But they would just have to be sacrificed.

This argument will have a lot of resonance amongst those who staff the professional "pro-choice" organisations. Half their time is spent buzzing about MPs at Westminster. They see things exclusively in terms of smart parliamentary tactics and the division lobbies. They have been encouraged in this trimming exercise by the number of previously

ABORTION RIGHTS No compromise

KATHY TRAVERS

"pro-choice" MPs who have stated that they support the reduced time limit.

Many abortion activists suggested that it would be a good deal to agree a reduction in the upper time limit in return for abortion on demand up to 12 weeks. But the Houghton Bill does not even contain any such tempting kernel. Although it would technically allow abortion on medical grounds without an upper time limit, this gain would in no way compensate for a concession which outlaws abortion for other reasons.

This quandary flows from the campaigners basing their whole strategy on Parliament, or winning majorities there. This means making alliances with people who wish to restrict abortion in minor ways against those who want to limit it in major ones.

Of course tactical compromises may have to be made in any battle. But they must actually take you towards your overall goal. If they take you away from it then they aid your opponent. The tactic of accepting a reduced time limit clearly does nothing to move us towards the goal of free abortion on demand without time limits. It does exactly the opposite. Support for Houghton is not a clever tactical manoeuvre but an unprincipled and unnecessary concession to our enemies.

What is the way to win greater choice for women? We cannot leave the defence and extension of our rights to parliament. Parliament is not a neutral body which responds to logical arguments about improved democratic rights. It represents the interests of a ruling class committed root and branch to the oppression of women. Although many rights have been forced out of parliament they have been partial and, for the majority of women, ineffectual.

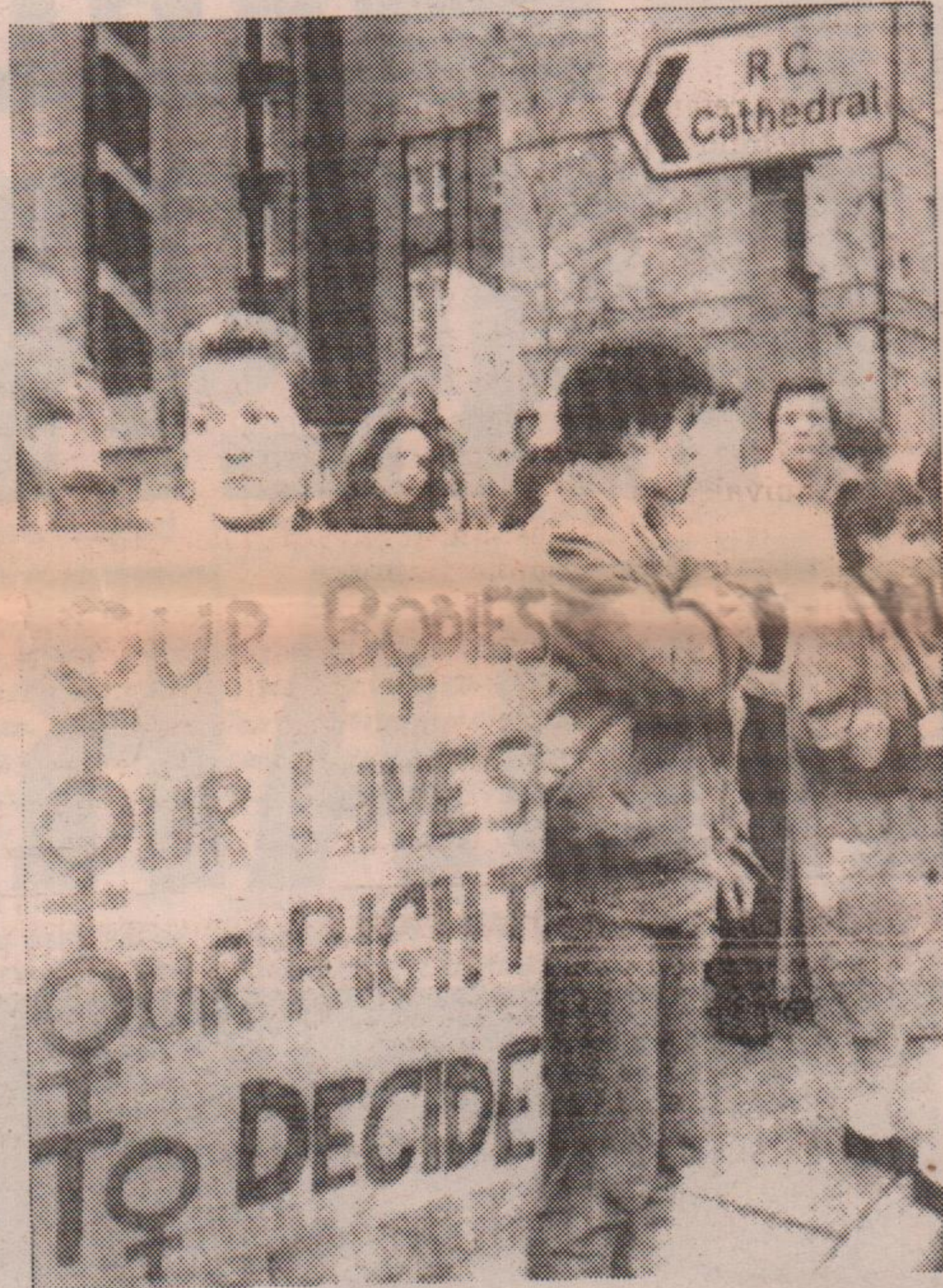
The Equal Pay Act was granted under pressure from the unions and working class women, but has left the majority of working women with far lower pay rates than men. Similarly on abortion, the 1967 Act, whilst a real step forward for women, has not guaranteed abortion availability for working class women. It has left the decisions on abortion to doctors rather than women, and as health facilities have declined, so has the availability of abortions on the NHS, hitting working class women the hardest.

Organise

Only when women organise on a mass scale have serious gains been made or attacks warded off. To get mass demonstrations, and a mass campaign, we have to turn centrally to the majority of women, the women of the working class and to the trade unions and working class political organisations that can mobilise them.

But some demands cannot be won by even the largest demonstrations. Absolutely free abortion on demand is one of them. It will require direct action—strike action to force parliament to concede such a demand. That is why here and now we need to put the trade unions centre stage in the fight against this attack.

Any concessions and retreats now will only encourage future attacks. The anti-abortionist bigots won't be bought off with sops. The bottom line must be defence of all existing rights but we need to go on to build a mass working class women's movement that can achieve, amongst other things free abortion and contraception on demand as a basic democratic right for women. ■



A Taylor-made solution?

BY JENNY SCOTT

well be brought back into play. Our democratic rights are still under threat.

In the name of improved safety the report proposes compulsory all-seater stadia. Of course, football grounds are often unsafe, but is this the answer? Definitely not. It was not the existence of terraces that caused the Hillsborough disaster; it was police mismanagement, bungled ticket arrangements by clubs that do not care about their fans and the inadequate provision of emergency services within the ground. All of these things could be rectified without resorting to all-seater grounds.

The instruction to build all-seater grounds will make going to football matches even more expensive for working class people. If a parent took two children to a match then it would cost over £20 for seats at current prices. For 90 minutes of

entertainment this is exorbitant.

Terrace life is not the picture of unrelenting barbarism that ignorant journalists and politicians paint. It can be, at its best, an enjoyable, collective experience, one full of humour and even solidarity. Its destruction will take the game even further away from the people who sustain it week in and week out.

For all these reasons we need to maintain the fans' organisations that sprang up in response to the ID cards proposals. We must oppose many of the Taylor Report's proposals. We must develop our own methods to tackle the problems of hooliganism, racism and regional chauvinism, all of which can blight an afternoon's pleasure.

Direct action against hooligans and racists, supported by the labour movement, will be far more effective than indiscriminate police harassment, and expensive stadia made safe for the middle classes. ■

THE THINGS they say! Thatcher pontificated that improvements to football grounds could be financed by spending less money on transfer deals.

It's true that the multi-million pound trade in players is a sickening feature of the game. But Thatcher has no room to talk. Just before she decided to kick off against the miners she made a multi-million pound swoop to secure the transfer of Ian MacGregor to the Coal Board's flagging forward line. She has encouraged countless other such deals in government departments and private industry.

If that money had been spent on making the country's grounds safer then we'd all be better off. ■

Gorbachev's dilemma

GORBACHEV IS in serious trouble. His "Man of the Year" award from Radio Four listeners will do little to help him cope with the crisis engulfing the USSR.

At stake is not only his personal fate but his programme of economic restructuring, *perestroika*, and political openness, *glasnost*. Both have created more problems than they have solved.

Perestroika has dismantled or weakened the central planning mechanisms. But instead of economic growth chaos is the result. More and more goods are disappearing from the shelves, rationing is on the increase and spivs, dressed up as "co-operatives", are making a killing at the expense of the consumers.

It is estimated that a 49% price rise across the board would be necessary to bring supply and demand into equilibrium. Gorbachev realises this would provoke major resistance. He also rejects the idea of borrowing heavily from the west in order to pay for a big increase in consumer imports that could be sold at market prices. This would only increase the leverage imperialism already has over the USSR.

Unemployment is adding to the misery of a life of rationing and food shortages. In 1989 1.8 million jobs were lost. The government admits that there are now 13 million people out of work.

Parallel with this bleak economic situation is the problem of mounting political instability. *Glasnost* has revitalised political life in the USSR. It was designed to create a base for Gorbachev's reforms amongst the masses. With the people behind him Gorbachev hoped to be able to defeat the inert and conservative elements of the bureaucracy.

What Gorbachev is discovering is that the masses cannot simply be moulded to suit his own bureaucratic need. The working class is striking out on an independent course. In the face of unemployment and attacks on wage bonuses, workers are taking action to defend themselves. Last year there were seven million days lost in strikes—the equivalent of 30,000 workers on strike each day.

New organisations are growing. Last November workers' committees, drawn from 16 towns in the Keremovski region of Siberia, agreed to form a union of the workers of the Kusbass. Representatives from the Donbass and Vorkuta were also present. A Workers' Union of Byelorussia and a Workers' Alliance in Moldavia were formed in the

same period. More recently in Sverdlovsk a new workers' union—Unity—was founded out of workers' representatives from 21 local enterprises.

This movement could develop into a force mightier than any possible coalition between all factions of the bureaucracy. And this is a real dilemma and danger for Gorbachev. He still needs to lean upon this unofficial movement to support himself against the growing bloc of opposition within the bureaucracy. But he fears the movement that it is slipping out of his control.

The movements of the nationalities—especially the Popular Fronts in the Baltic and Caucasian republics—shows why he has every right to be worried. They have already got out of control. Gorbachev's initial attempt to mobilise the nationalities on his side aroused their indignation against the crimes of Great Russian chauvinism. It fuelled demands not merely for autonomy, but for secession.

Turmoil was the result, confronting the Kremlin with the prospect of the break up of the USSR itself. The mixture of repression and dialogue offered by Gorbachev as a way out of the national conflicts is not working. The spread of secessionist sentiments to the Ukraine and throughout Central Asia is on the cards.

In the face of all this the coalition of bureaucratic conservatives is coming together, worried that Gorbachev's concessions are threatening the continued rule of the bureaucracy itself. Since 1985 Gorbachev has been in conflict with the "conservative" wing around Yegor Ligachev. Consequently he was obliged to resort to mobilising forces outside the bureaucracy and the party to assure him of success.

The 1989 elections suggested that this strategy was working. The conservative faction suffered a resounding defeat. It only maintained a strong presence in the Congress of People's Deputies because of undemocratic restrictions on voting. The overhead cost of this "victory", however, was the substantial growth of non-party organisations and popular fronts.

Now the conservatives are regrouping. In the vanguard of opposition to Gorbachev is the Leningrad party boss Boris Gidasov. Originally a Gorbachev appointee he has now taken it upon himself to rally the anti-*perestroika* forces. He is running a party outfit which is increasingly open about its

EDITORIAL

anti-Semitism and Great Russian chauvinism.

The danger to the Gorbachevites comes not only from the leaden rump of the bureaucracy. Many of the "radical marketisers" feel that economic anarchy can only be resolved by an authoritarian imposition of some of the economic measures they are trying to thrust upon Gorbachev. As some in the unofficial opposition movement have long recognised, the "radical marketisers" are by no means consistent democrats.

Over the coming months these factions are preparing to do battle. The February and March elections, the February Plenum of the Central Committee and the Party Congress next autumn will all witness the sharpening of the faction fight against a background of economic crisis, working class struggle and national upheavals. The open conflict and disarray of the ruling caste could present the working class with the opportunity to make a decisive move against the entire edifice of Stalinist rule.

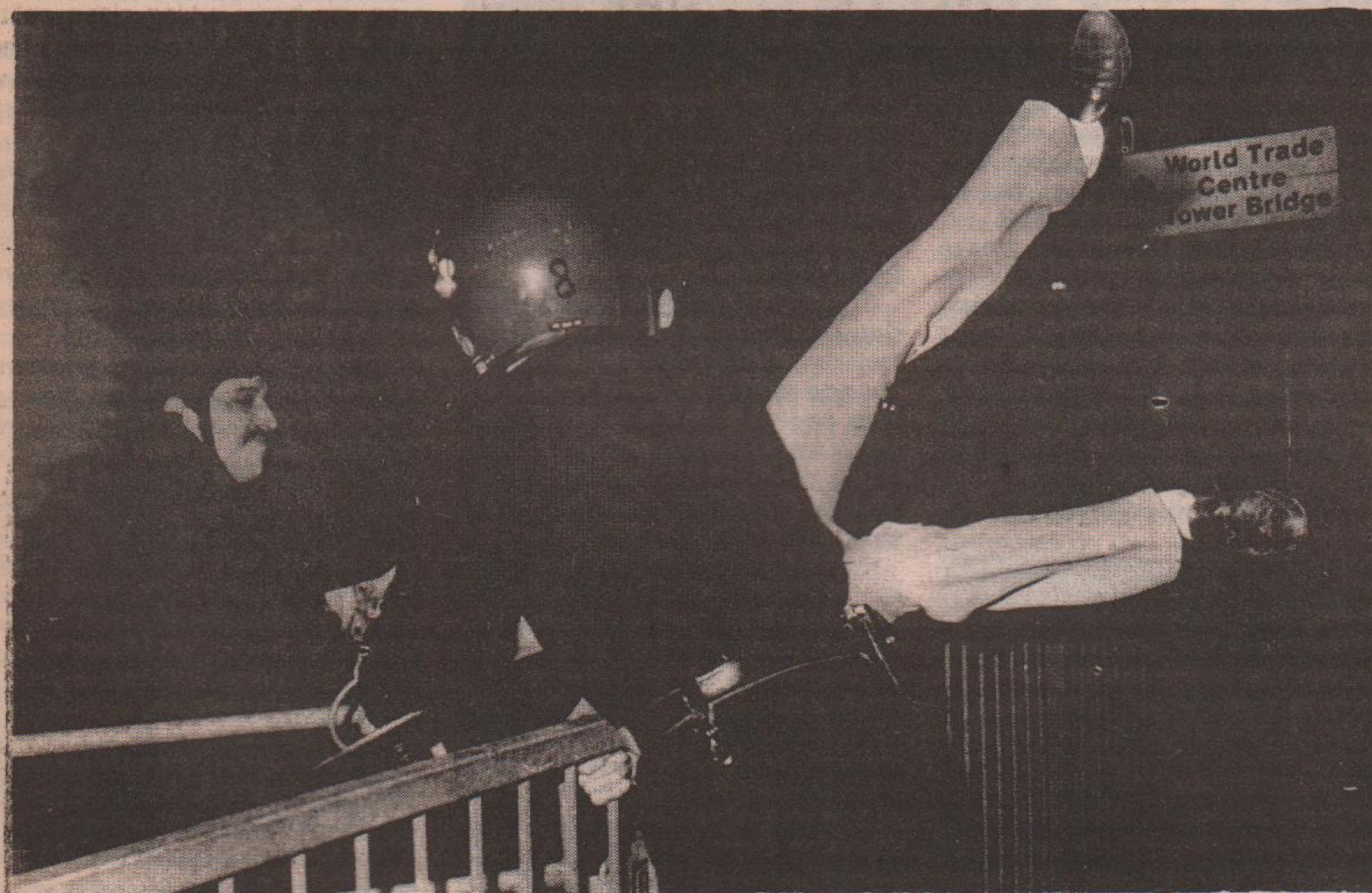
The USSR is moving rapidly towards a revolutionary situation. But Gorbachev cannot be removed under the new constitution simply by a conservative majority in the Central Committee of the CPSU. Some sort of coup, involving the KGB and the army would be necessary. A pre-emptive strike by Gorbachev himself or by one of his opponents is a possibility.

In a period of mounting struggles by all the popular strata this could only be successful temporarily. It would meet massive resistance. Indeed it would probably be defeated and lead to a dual power situation such as occurred in Eastern Europe.

Of course, the possibility remains that Gorbachev escapes at the price of making further concessions. His strongest card is that his opponents in the bureaucracy have no real alternative programme; discontent and even outrage do not add up to a policy. Even so, the scale of the USSR's crisis is narrowing Gorbachev's scope for offering such concessions.

The crisis offers another alternative. Gorbachev could be overthrown from below. Such a fate for their "Man of the Year" would upset Radio Four's middle class listeners. For revolutionary Trotskyists it would be a tremendous step forward along the road of political revolution and the destruction of the Stalinist bureaucracy. ■

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THE POLICE used excessive violence and acted in an undisciplined fashion at Wapping on 24 January 1987. This is the verdict of a Northamptonshire police enquiry into the Met's thuggery.

They were just as brutal at most other demos outside the News International plant during the dispute. They were just as brutal at Orgreave during the miners' strike. They have always used excessive violence against workers in struggle. But the Northants police were not interested in taking previous offences into account.

Whatever satisfaction we get from this mild rebuke for the Met, we need to remember that the police were only doing their job—defending the capitalists from the working class. And they will get better at it. Wyn Jones, the man in charge of the Wapping operation, is now using his experience as the new training officer for the Met. The workers' answer to this brutality is not to sit back and await police enquiries into the police. We have to organise our own defence of picket lines so that when the constables try it on with us we can give a lot more than we get. ■

EAST LONDON postal workers jumped the gun on the TUC's "day" of solidarity with the ambulance workers. In mid January the UCW members decided that they wanted to hear the arguments of the ambulance workers first hand during work time. They simply staged an hour's stoppage to conduct the meeting. Management at London Overseas Mail Office did not lift a finger to stop them or discipline them afterwards. All this because the TUC asked us to plead with our bosses for an extra 15 minutes lunch break on 30 January. ■

PITTSTON MINERS' STRIKE

THE 1,700 striking miners at Pittston have reached a critical stage in their fight after nine months on the picket lines. The mineworkers face mounting hardship and the isolation imposed by their national union bureaucracy. They will soon vote on a deal stitched up by the United Mine-workers of America (UMWA) national president Richard Trumka and the Pittston Coal Group.

The new contract with Pittston would mark a further step away from national bargaining in the coal industry. The union leadership also conceded the principle at the centre of the dispute, allowing Pittston to substantially cut its contributions to pension and medical insurance funds. In exchange, the mining bosses dropped some of their more draconian demands,

agreed to continue recognition of the UMWA and to support the union in purging \$65 million (£40 million) in fines imposed by federal judges.

The agreement represents a shabby betrayal of the creativity and determination of the strikers and their families, who have stood firm in the face of company gun thugs and constant state violence and harassment. Three have died, hundreds have been hospitalised and thousands more arrested over the course of the strike.

The class fighters of Virginia, West Virginia and Kentucky, clad in their trademark camouflage, deserve better than this deal struck over their heads. They would have achieved more if the union leaders had transformed the wave of solidarity strikes by 45,000 miners across ten states into indefinite national action. Instead they bowed before the courts and threw away the chance to regain something of the UMWA's old might.

Whatever the outcome of the ballot the spirited example of the Pittston strike will inspire other American workers over the decade ahead. ■

AT THE start of the new year, violence flared once more in the West Virginia coalfield as an unknown gunman shot dead striking miner John McCoy, and seriously wounded two of his fellow pickets. UMWA members suspect the return of company "gun law".

The company this time is Regency Industries, a mining sub-contractor, desperate to break the strike. Regency's bosses had provoked the walkout by refusing to cough up nearly £200,000 worth of back wages and medical benefits owed to its workers. The company has seized on McCoy's murder as an excuse for hiring still more gun thugs. Miners still waging a bitter battle with Pittston coal group have pledged marches and rallies throughout the region in memory of John McCoy and "... to make the coal companies take notice that we won't stand by and let them kill our brothers". ■

NEW REALISM

AMBULANCE WORKERS have been in dispute with the Tories for months. Yet the one weapon they could use to bring about a speedy victory—an all out indefinite national strike—has been ruled out by their leader Roger Poole. His handling of the dispute is a classic case of new realism.

New realism became a catchphrase of the trade union leadership in the mid-1980s. They don't speak about it much these days. They are too busy practicing it. What exactly does the phrase mean?

It was first used by the right wing in the days before the miners' strike. Alastair Graham, then the leader of the CPSA, coined the phrase at a TUC conference. He called for a spirit of new realism in the unions in the aftermath of Thatcher's second election victory.

According to Graham, Thatcher had not only won at the polls, she had won in the workplaces. Trade unionists now accepted her priorities and were unwilling to fight to defend their jobs and wages. The leaders should take note and enter into a dialogue with the Tories and the bosses with the aim of organising industrial harmony.

Graham's preachings found a ready audience amongst the tired bureaucrats reeling from the Tory offensive. Their early "opposition" to the anti-union laws had come to nothing. Their membership rolls, and funds, had been depleted by mass unemployment. Worst of all, the leaders, used to the privilege of being called for consultations with successive governments, had been repeatedly snubbed by Thatcher. If they bent to her will then maybe they could once again enter the inner sanctums of the state.

Their plans to embrace this new realist approach to the Tories—talk to them, don't fight them—were wrecked for a time by the year long miners' strike. But once that was out of the way. The new plans for collaboration with the enemy could be implemented.

The defeat of the miners, a defeat they deliberately helped bring about by refusing active solidarity, strengthened their case. The strongest section of the working class had been beaten. There was no choice but to offer the Tories a dialogue based on surrender.

New realism spread rapidly throughout the bureaucracy, championed by the Communist Party, the Kinnock wing of the Labour Party and the right wing of the trade union movement.

There is nothing particularly new, or realistic about this philosophy. Trade union leaders have



Ron Todd and Norman Willis—old whine and no bottle

long believed that their job in life is to reconcile the working class with the bosses. They have always carried out this job on the bosses' terms.

Where we revolutionary Marxists believe that there is no common interest between workers and their capitalist employers, the union leaders have always insisted that we must all pull together for the "national interest". They believe in and have (with a handful of individual exceptions) always practiced class collaboration.

New realism is simply a modern form of class collaboration. But it does have several specific features that militants need to recognise and fight against.

● New realism believes that the anti-union laws cannot be beaten. In place of solidarity, mass pickets, defiance of injunctions, rapid responses to bosses' attacks with action, it urges obedience to the law. So last year the dock strike was fatally delayed for three months while Ron Todd pleaded with judges. In 1984 the NUM had all of its funds stolen and the TUC refused to lift a finger.

● Militant industrial action alienates the public according to new realism. So, instead of building solidarity action with the ambulance workers the new realists are conducting a public relations exercise. Rather than picket and demonstrate in support of the ambu-

lance workers trade unionists in the West Midlands, for example, are being told to organise a "white nose day", based on Comic Reliefs charity "red nose days"! Bishops and celebrities dominate rally platforms in Trafalgar Square.

● Not only do the new realists think it impossible to beat Thatcher with direct action, they argue that such things as strikes damage Labour's electoral chances. All of the interests of the working class have to be subordinated to winning support for Labour at such elections.

● The trade unions themselves are outdated, say the new realists. Their concentration in the past on defending, however inadequately, their members' interests in the workplaces has to give way to new structures and new methods of relating to the bosses. They need to sell themselves in "beauty contests" by proving to the bosses they are committed to the good of the firm. Single union and often no-strike deals are needed. Mergers, creating vast organisations emphasising financial services to the members, must take the place of the remnants of workplace organisation. Service unionism, claim the new realists, is more attractive to the "public" than old style trade unionism.

All of these aspects of new realism have one thing in common. They all accept that the gains made by the bosses in the Thatcher years are irreversible. The defeats suffered mean that the working class must adapt to the needs of capitalism. If it does then one day it will be rewarded by Labour in office.

Two thousand years ago Jesus preached that the "meek shall inherit the earth". If we follow the advice of the new realists then the ambulance workers may have to wait even longer before they win a decent pay award. Meekness, new realism, call it what you want, will always be "rewarded" by ever bolder attacks from the bosses. Determination, a fighting, militant spirit and the politics of class struggle, revolutionary communism, on the other hand, can put the bosses to flight. ■

FORDS

As we go to press the 550 craft and maintenance workers at Ford's Halewood estate have voted to continue their strike against the bosses' deskilling drive.

The strike has paralysed production not only on Merseyside but at the van plant in Southampton. Ford claim that a shortage of transmission parts will soon halt Sierra output at Dagenham.

With Ford losing £9 million in production at Halewood alone, the craft workers have shown their power. They are absolutely right to use it in spite of the three to two vote across the combine to accept the two year deal on pay and conditions.

Though Ford bosses have temporarily succeeded in persuading line workers to settle for a meagre real pay rise, the margin in favour shows there was substantial hostility to the new contract.

The National Joint Negotiating Committee (NJNC) recommended rejection of Ford's offer but it is to blame for the acceptance of a deal with long strings which management intends to pull very taut.

After December's overwhelming vote to throw out Ford's "final offer", Adams, Airie and the NJNC had a decisive mandate to call an all-out strike. They chose instead to waste a whole month in fruitless talks.

The delay served the bureaucrats' purpose of dampening the anger while allowing the anti-union laws to be used to force a second ballot. The bosses made good use of their breathing space and gambled that 10.2% was enough to avoid a strike.

Welcome as the Halewood action is, the striking maintenance workers face the danger of isolation if the dispute remains sectional. The bosses' productivity offensive, codified in the new contract, poses a huge threat to the conditions of all Ford's workers, not just the skilled. This argument must be won with those on the line as well.

This time round plant level management faces far stiffer pressures from Ford's bosses in Detroit to ensure that the attack on working practices bites and a sweeping reorganisation of the shop floor actually happens. The domestic car industry in the USA is slumping badly with eleven of Ford's plants putting workers on extended layoffs. That makes the European empire and especially the UK-based operations, all the more strategic.

The coming of 1992, and with it stiffer competition from Japan's car giants, means all the industry's bosses squeezing labour harder.

When confronted with Jimmy Airie's inevitable instruction to go back to work, the Halewood strikers should stand their ground and use the newly formed national committee of craft stewards to issue the call for an all-out strike across the combine.

This must be an appeal to production workers, as well as engineers, around the minimum demands of a substantial real pay rise for the whole workforce and decided by it, with no strings attached and a cut in the working week to 35 hours.

To carry the fight forward will mean confronting the Tories' anti-union laws as well as bringing the NJNC to account. A strike against Ford now provides the perfect chance to challenge the union bureaucracy which has quietly ditched the demand for the 35 hour week and sown the seeds of potential divisions amongst Ford's workers when their energy should have hit at the common foe of the car industry bosses. ■

CPSA

THE NATIONAL leadership of the CPSA began 1990 in all too familiar fashion. It stitched together a shabby deal to end the long-running dispute in Department of Employment (DE) offices (see WP125 for details). The bureaucrats accepted a formula on staffing levels put forward by management in early November.

Meanwhile, the DE section leadership, dominated by the Stalinist influenced Broad Left '84 (BL'84), told its members to return to work

and negotiate local agreements. This has given management the green light to victimise almost at will. In Sheffield, for example, although workers have since wrung some concessions from management, they initially faced compulsory relocation for refusing to work with those who had scabbed during strike action. The national leadership refused to lift a finger in support of them or any other group of DE workers under threat.

The BL'84 leadership has become

ever more indistinguishable from the dominant Ellis wing of the bureaucracy. The BL'84 leadership was to the fore of the recent attack on the South West and Wales DSS section.

The pretext for attacking the section meeting was that the agenda included a discussion of the Poll Tax and other "political items"; this was enough to rule the meeting out of order. In spite of the CPSA's paper policy of opposition to the Poll Tax, any attempt to implement the policy is intolerable.

Such quashing of the CPSA's limited internal democracy is likely to become the norm as the union bureaucracy presses ahead with its proposed merger with NUCPS. Rank and file members of both unions should fight tooth and nail against merger under the terms currently being discussed.

At present, a fusion of the CPSA and NUCPS would result in an unwieldy dual branch structure and a tightening of centralised bureaucratic control over branch finances at the behest of the CPSA leadership. The new union would continue to include the managerial layer of NUCPS membership.

CPSA and NUCPS activists should, however, be fighting for a single civil service union without managers in its ranks. Based on outright opposition to the cosy deals done with management and the attacks on union democracy, such a union is the only real alternative to the model "new realist" organisation envisaged by John Ellis and his bankrupt co-thinkers on the CPSA national executive. ■

NUJ

MANAGEMENT AT virtually all of the national daily newspapers have escalated their offensive against the NUJ in recent weeks. Associated Newspapers, parent firm of such vile rags as the *Daily Mail* and *London Evening Standard*, along with Rupert Murdoch's News International have actually de-recognised the journalists' union.

The Mirror Group of Caviar "socialist" Robert Maxwell has joined the publishing bosses at the *Telegraph* in imposing individual contracts on NUJ members.

The bosses' tactics have included the threat of mass sackings and the private "persuasion" of senior journalists in an effort to get their signatures on individual contracts. These include a sweetener of a 10% backdated pay rise in return

for a pledge to take no industrial action against Associated Newspapers.

The story is even worse in the provincial press where more than 100 NUJ members continue their battle for jobs and union recognition against the ruthless management of the *Aberdeen Press and Journal*.

A valiant 14 NUJ members, sacked by Associated's subsidiary, Northcliffe, have stayed out for seven months at the *Essex Chronicle* series. These journalists refused personal contracts and made it plain that junior staff should no longer suffer from poverty pay levels. At present, however, they remain isolated and have resorted to the tactic of the boycott campaign against Northcliffe publications from Hull to Cornwall.

The boycott demands the support of every Labour council, trade union and class conscious worker, but it is unlikely to win on its own. The Essex strikers must link their fight to the ongoing dispute of NUJ members at the parent firm, Associated Newspapers.

If the union is to survive management's onslaught an all-out strike is a necessity. Sooner or later journalists throughout the national press will have to follow suit or else lose the union and their working conditions.

Indefinite strike action with or without the approval of NUJ officials and a fight to forge new links with the rank and file of the NGA and SOGAT is needed. This could lay the basis for the long overdue single industrial union in the print. ■

AMBULANCE DISPUTE

AFTER MORE than four months of limited and uneven industrial action the ambulance dispute remains deadlocked. This stalemate cannot go on forever. The bosses' media has played up reports of cracks in the resolve of some ambulance workers. These warning signs must not be ignored. But if the fight for a decent pay rise is in danger, the blame rests squarely with NUPE's Roger Poole and his bankrupt strategy.

In the words of London North West NUPE branch secretary Eric Roberts: "For months we have been indulging in a Ghandi-type resistance but ambulance staff now want more". Members from stations in Robert's own branch have finally taken strike action, joining brothers and sisters in West Sussex and Essex. They have had enough of Poole's public relations gimmickry and reliance on the "good will" or electoral fears of backbench Tories.

Ambulance workers can see all too clearly that his "new realism" has not budged the Tories at all. The whole cabinet has rallied around Clarke, while he and

Thatcher are determined to stand firm despite the opinion polls.

Platforms of church figures and celebrities and "human chains" across inner-city boroughs cannot force the Tories to cough up. For the moment they may boost morale, but will not pay for ambulance workers' mortgages. All-out national strike action, on the other hand, can still win.

The strikers in Edinburgh, London and the south east remain dangerously isolated. Poole and other union full timers have rounded on them viciously. But so far the strikes have proved unwilling or unable to challenge the bureaucrats' stranglehold.

Poole has delayed even calling a strike ballot and deflected the growing anger against him by playing on the fear of loss of public support. This appeal worked even at the London stewards' meeting on 23 January. Poole himself has joined with the TUC bureaucrats in throwing away the enormous potential of working class solidarity around 30 January by refusing to call for strike action above a token 15 minutes.

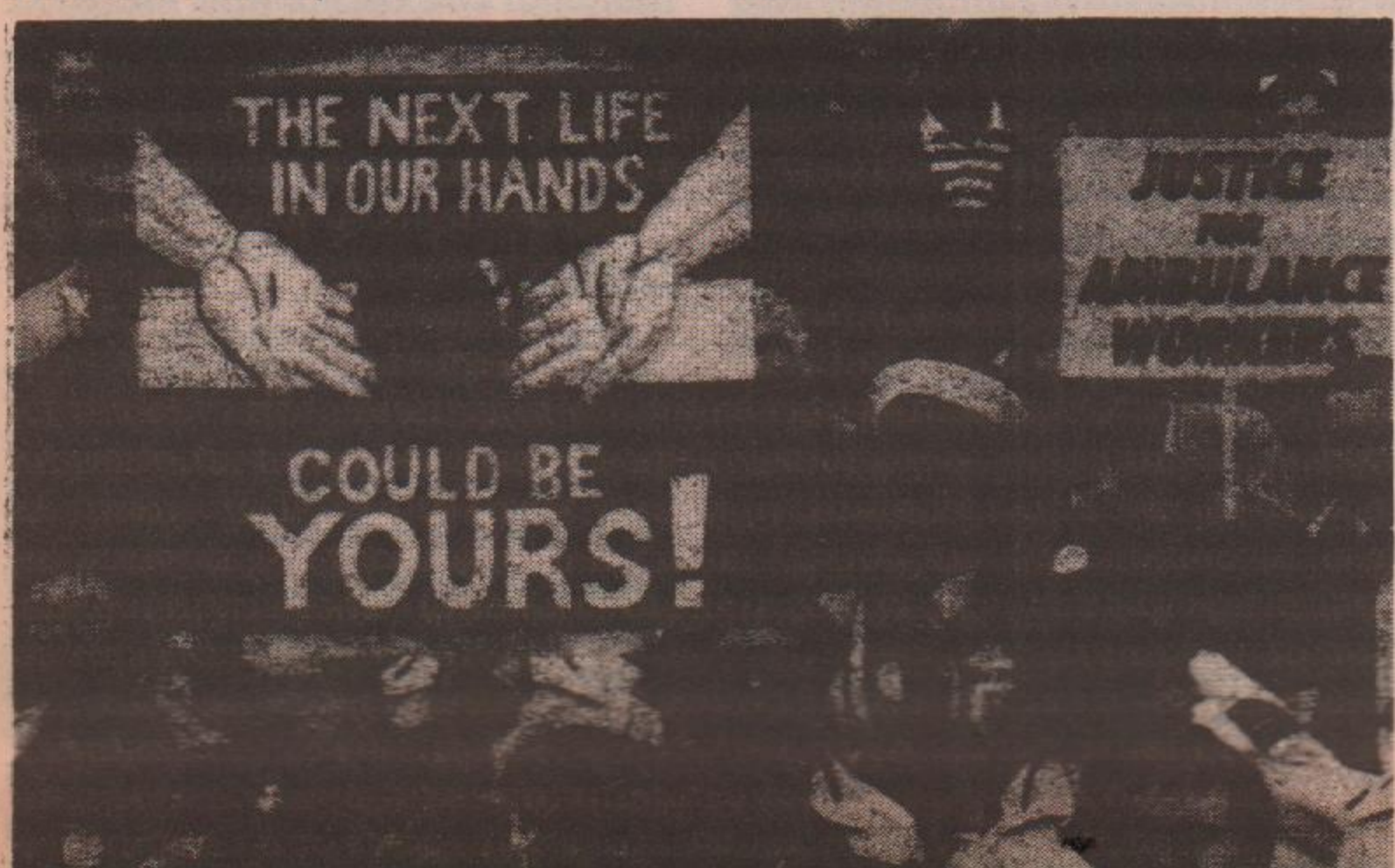
The argument must be won that management and the Tories bear the blame for any deaths which might occur amidst an all out strike. It is they who have spent over £30 million on the scabbing operations of the army, police and private sector vultures. The bosses in London have even stripped ambulances of life-saving equipment in an effort to undermine emergency cover. The bleating concern for patient care is a sick, hypocritical joke.

Against management raids ambulance workers must defend their stations and equipment by occupying in defiance of court injunctions.

They need to cash in on the pledges of support from NCU members in British Telecom to maintain phone services. This will be vital to the maintenance of emergency cover on the crews' own terms. Above all else, militants in the dispute need to fight for an indefinite strike throughout the country.

The crews already out should stand firm and seek to spread the action. In London, Manchester and elsewhere, mass meetings are needed to boost confidence and build for a strike in defiance of the leadership. Unofficial bodies such as the Birmingham Southwick stewards' committee must reconvene without delay. Too much is at stake to wait any longer.

The future not only of the pay claim, but of trade union organisation in the ambulance service hangs in the balance. An immediate strike is needed. Backed by the massive solidarity action from other workers which could be achieved by a call from strikers themselves, the ambulance workers can and must win. ■



NATFHE

POLYTECHNIC MANAGEMENT has taken off the gloves in the fight to intimidate NATFHE lecturers who are waging a long-running fight to defend pay and conditions. In late December the PCEF, the bosses' umbrella body, threatened to refuse to recognise NATFHE within nine months and to dock up to 20% from the pay of the lecturers implementing the union's boycott of the exams and assessment process.

As the new term began the "no nonsense" management at Birmingham Poly wasted little time in victimising two lecturers who refused to invigilate exams on a housing diploma course. Management have deducted pay and suspended the contracts of the staff members. Students on the course had backed the NATFHE action by refusing to sit the exams which the lecturers would not invigilate.

The Poly's director initially told the students that they had all failed the course, but retracted the threat against second year students, though not first years, after protests by other students and staff. The recent events at Birmingham highlight the need and potential for such joint action between lecturers and students throughout the polytechnic sector. Such a united front can both prevent the victimisation of NATFHE members and lay the basis for defeating a whole range of Tory inspired attacks.

Lecturers have waited for a decent pay rise since last April when most institutions opted out of local authority control and became limited companies. They remain, however, heavily dependent on central government funding. The Tories have refused to release an additional £12 million to the sector unless the PCEF imposes a "productivity" package on academic staff.

The bosses want part time lecturers and department heads stripped

of national negotiating rights and subject to locally determined rates, allowing management to cut costs on social science and humanities courses, while spending more money to lure accountants and computer specialists from the "real" private sector.

For full time lecturers the proposed offer would mean shorter holidays and longer working weeks. A defeat for NATFHE spells ever larger class sizes, the elimination of "uneconomic" courses and the introduction of cost-cutting two year degrees.

Given NATFHE's historic lack of militancy the exams boycott is a major step forward. As last years experience of university lectures shows, however, this sanction will probably not be enough to make the bosses budge. The grave situation now confronting staff demands an all-out strike—sooner rather than later.

To win this means a fight against both the professionalism of many members and the "new realism" of

the union leadership as a whole.

Where management attempts to victimise individuals our response should be local strike action to win their reinstatement on full pay and benefits. At the same time, though, we need to push the call by the Socialist Lecturers' Alliance for a special delegate conference to hammer out a winning strategy. This means indefinite strike action across the sector until a real pay rise is won for all academic staff without any of the strings demanded in the new contracts.

At the same time we need to build a unified fight with our colleagues in the FE sector who face similar attacks. They have already staged two day-long strikes and are pursuing the exams sanction as well. Intimidation by local authority management, led by Labour controlled Sheffield, has underlined the need to escalate this to an all-out strike. No other course can defend our pay and conditions as well as strengthening the battle to preserve and extend higher education. ■

STUDENTS

STUDENTS AT the Polytechnic of East London (PEL) returned to college after Christmas to find a "for sale" notice outside one of the sites. The lease for Livingstone House in Stratford has expired and rather than renew it, the penny-pinching management has decided to transfer students to another site.

Livingstone House is in the Stratford area of East London. It traditionally attracts more mature students, any of whom have children and moving to the other site will mean increased travelling time and childcare problems.

Conditions for teachers will also deteriorate—tutors have been told to expect shared offices. This will remove many facilities for seminars and tutorials.

The privatisation of the polytechnics last April has led to colleges being urged to increase their student intake at the same time as resources are being constantly cutback.

This must of course be very stressful for college chiefs who have to make the decisions. So much so that the rector of PEL has just awarded himself a 28% wage rise! ■



SPOTLIGHT ON THE ECONOMY

Marshall Aid for Eastern Europe?

DIRECT AID and investment from the imperialist powers will play a crucial part in the ongoing drama of the possible restoration of capitalism in Eastern Europe. Among the ruling classes of the west and Japan, debate now centres on the question: how much aid, how quickly and for what purpose?

The bourgeois media increasingly talks of a new "Marshall aid" package to transform these countries of 140 million people. The Marshall Plan included \$17 billion in US government money given as a grant over a few years in the late 1940s. It sought to reconstruct the ravaged economies of post-war Western Europe. Forty years later is the same in store for the people of Budapest and Bucharest?

The short answer is no. At today's prices the equivalent scale of aid would be in the region of \$200 billion, given absolutely "free". In the late 1940s the USA effectively transferred 1.5% of its GNP to Europe. Today the total amount of "foreign aid" for all countries from the USA is 0.7% of GNP per annum.

No one imperialist country or group of countries has that amount of concentrated surplus capital available. In the late 1940s the USA accounted for about 50% of world production in key commodities. The reconstruction of Europe meant renewed markets for its own economy.

But the most important aim in the reconstruction of stable imperialist powers after 1947 was to create a bulwark against the influence of Stalinism. Today, the coalition of imperialist powers intends to take full advantage of the crisis of Stalinism, but it does not seek to transform the Eastern Bloc countries into strong rivals to themselves. Under capitalism the future for most of these states is one of semi-colonial dependence.

An overriding political factor which inhibits major aid is the imperialists' recognition that the momentous events of last year have not resulted in stable pro-capitalist governments. For them the social counter-revolution is stuck half-way. The "reforms" could yet be reversed without governments and armies absolutely committed to protecting private property in the means of production and guaranteeing the return of profit to the multinationals' home bases. Until then the imperialists will be cautious. For some time to come the key task will be the creation of stable governments and significant national capitalist classes.

Poland gives a good example of the kind of government related aid available. The western powers have offered the Mazowiecki government some \$1 billion in loans. But Poland already has huge debts which it cannot repay. And while the imperialists will loosen the rope, the debt noose will be kept around Poland's neck precisely to keep it subordinated.

In addition Poland has been offered \$725 million in standby credit from the IMF to help stabilise the Zloty and \$1.5 billion in project finance and structural adjustment money from the World Bank. The latter is earmarked for new enterprising industries and to dampen discontent from factory closures. Compare this carefully controlled drip feed to the \$40 billion free gift that a "Marshall Aid" type package

would mean for Poland today.

If governments and aid institutions have shown caution then individual multinational companies have taken more risks. There is a huge market to dominate and a literate, skilled and cheap workforce to exploit. Faced with a dramatic slowdown in the post-1982 global recovery, major companies are driven by competition to gamble with their capital, so as not to lose out to their rivals.

The leaders in the race to date are West German, French and Japanese companies. Hungary and Poland have been the biggest recipients because of the political "progress" they have made. But the more developed Czechoslovakian and East German economies are likely to attract greater investment in the next years.

Already the number of joint ventures in East Europe has leapt to over 3,000 by the end of 1989, a three-fold increase since 1986. These indicate the likely form of investment in the next few years.

The re-introduction of capitalism, with the key aid of imperialism, will not happen overnight, nor without its social convulsions. Imperialism will have to approach the task in a series of discrete, if overlapping, stages if it is to be achieved.

Hungary and Poland have set the pace for the first phase, one of price and tax rises, the reduction in state subsidies for the health, transport, housing and food of the workers. The aim of these measures is to restore budgetary balance, conquer inflation and forge a stable currency that is increasingly convertible on the world market. This will go hand in hand with a stock-taking and accounting of the national wealth (and debt) of each East European country. But these measures, even taken together, do not signify the return of capitalism. Much more will be needed.

Industry and finance must be "freed" from state control and made independent of the former. The small private enterprises in commerce must be boosted and entrepreneurial capital stimulated within industry to create a national capitalist class. The wholesale closures of unprofitable industries, particularly in the heavy industrial sector, would accompany this.

Those that can be made profitable would be privatised; some falling into the hands of the imperialist trans-nationals, some going to bolster the indigenous capitalists. The closure and privatisation programme will create a huge reserve army of labour to provide a pool of workers essential to the creation of a genuine "free" labour market and a fully stratified system of wage rates necessary for competitive capitalism. The fact that capitalism means savage inequality will become plain to millions.

When East European industry is pared down to its narrow, potentially profitable, base then a fully functioning stock market would be needed to speed up and regulate the free movement of capital in each of these countries. At most an indicative planning system would remain for any residual state industries, but the centralised regulation of investment, prices and labour would be at an end. The conversion of the economy into a mixed one of private and state capitalist trusts would mark the definite restoration of capitalism—the imperialists' ultimate goal. ■

ZIMBABWE

A crisis of expectations

Nelson Mandela's release will lead to a renewed bout of negotiations in South Africa. Powerful forces are looking for a settlement. Leading figures of big business and of the African National Congress talk increasingly of a "Zimbabwe-type solution". But a decade after independence huge inequalities remain in Zimbabwe. Joan Mayer considers the lessons of this constitutional settlement.

THE ZANU-PF government in Zimbabwe, headed by Robert Mugabe, swept into office in 1980 promising a hopeful new future. It outlined measures to tackle the land hunger of the peasants; the socialist rhetoric of the Mugabe leadership also helped it to win workers' support.

Ten years on defenders of Mugabe's record accept that inequality and land hunger remain. But they insist that Zimbabwe's economic achievements, with the resultant growth in education and other services, all adds up to a decade of significant progress. The conclusion is drawn: the Zimbabwe model is one worth following. But South African workers would be wrong to think along these lines.

The mass of black workers remain impoverished. Only a thin layer of the black middle class has prospered. Political rights are everywhere hemmed in by government restrictions; at the very start of this year Mugabe renewed the tough state of emergency which includes provision for powers of detention without trial. These powers have been renewed every six months since first promulgated by the white minority Smith regime in 1965!

Protected

The Lancaster House agreement, which ended the liberation war in 1979, ensured that capitalist interests would be protected and that the white minority could count on maintaining key privileges. The central planks of the agreement—one of the first acts of Thatcher's foreign policy—included the maintenance of a white voter bloc in Parliament, the need for a 100% vote in the legislature to change the Constitution and severe restrictions on the transfer of wealth and land.

Before independence half of all farmland—and almost all the quality land—was reserved for white settlers. Today, about one-third of available land is still owned by Zimbabwe's 4,000 white farmers. Some 750,000 communal farmers occupy less than one half of the land, most of which is very poor quality. Only 7% of black farmers have been resettled since 1980, less than half the number who were promised resettlement within the first five years after independence. Consequently, black commercial agriculture is still restricted to 3.5% of the land.

Even now, as the provisions of Lancaster House run out, Mugabe is declaring there will be "no wanton land-grabbing exercise". The

large estates of the white farmers produce nearly 80% of the marketable output including the most vital export crops—tobacco, beef and soya. Rather than challenge this entrenched interest, the government chooses to continue its snail's pace programme of resettlement on under-used land.

But even if the early promises of land redistribution were kept, this would not be enough to solve the problem of a growing army of unemployed, added to by 250,000 school leavers each year. A strong manufacturing sector is vital to solve this. The Mugabe government has sought to build up the manufacturing base to a point where it accounts for 28% of GDP. Exports of manufactured goods have also risen. Growth was spectacular in the early years in the wake of the settlement, but suffered a severe decline when commodity prices fell, and is now running again at around 5%.

But these achievements have been made at the expense of black workers who ought to have been the ones benefiting from independence. Real wages are no higher than before independence while professional salaries are still twenty times the minimum wage!

A decade after independence most private capital is still in foreign or white hands. The mining sector, for instance, is dominated by Cluff, Rio Tinto's Renco and Anglo American. As this sector accounts for 43% of foreign currency earnings, such control puts a powerful lever in the hands of imperialist, and in particular South African, capital.

It is clear that Mugabe has remained faithful to the words he

delivered to trade unionists some years ago: "The country is based on free enterprise and is therefore capitalistic. We have to accept that we will not bring about an immediate disruption of the economy."

Of course the workers have not sat back, meekly accepting the indefinite postponement of the rewards for their sacrifices in the liberation war, when more than 30,000 lost their lives. Many have taken up their struggle within the trade unions. In response the ZANU-PF government has employed draconian labour laws to deal with this "crisis of expectations".

The strike wave that greeted independence brought workers right up against the new government's insistence on restraint. Police and troops were used against strikes especially where transnationals like Anglo American were involved.

Workers' committees sprung up. They contained many ZANU activists but were not at first under party control. The established trade unions were unable to contain rank and file action. The ZANU-PF leadership dealt with this by formalising the workers' committees and limiting their activities. At the same time the government sponsored the National Co-ordinating Committee of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU), thus restructuring the union movement from above and attempting to bring it under ZANU-PF control.

These measures, however, were not enough to enforce control. The government turned to the law and to the courts. The 1984 Labour Relations Act, while containing

various anti-discrimination measures and certain rights for workers, placed severe limitations on the right to strike. It was as restrictive as the legislation of the old Smith regime! On many occasions trade unionists have found themselves behind bars.

Small wonder then that the white capitalists in Zimbabwe have more than reconciled themselves to black majority rule and one person, one vote. It has given them a government that is so pro-capitalist that in 1986 the multinationals poured money into the ZANU-PF election funds. As government minister Nelson Mawema put it this was seen as a token of "appreciation of ZANU-PF's efforts in keeping workers disciplined".

In the 1980s there was a lengthy economic recovery throughout most of the imperialist world and the Pacific Rim. Africa and Latin America benefited least, but countries like Zimbabwe—a relatively developed semi-colony—were cushioned by the demand created during this recovery. This will not last. The lop-sided dependence of the economy on a few sectors will reveal the fragility of the country when the recession hits. Already there are signs that imperialism's grip on the economy is having an effect.

Mugabe is now under great pressure from imperialism—in particular the World Bank—to loosen state controls over imports and investment and to cut public spending. Zimbabwe needs foreign loans to shore up state infrastructure projects. But already 23% of national wealth goes on paying interest on existing loans. Any new loans will come with strings at-

tached.

Zimbabwe is in fact suffering from low investment. Some estimates suggest that as much capital is being withdrawn as invested. A long term lack of foreign exchange, combined with a restricted domestic market and a low rate of return, is putting off foreign investors. They are demanding more favourable terms and an end to what they call "an oppressive regulatory environment".

The imperialists have rested fairly content with Mugabe's *de facto* one party state, established since Nkomo's ZAPU merged with the larger party. As long as Mugabe kept order, the form of rule was of little importance. More recently pressure has grown to stop ZANU declaring an official one party state after the next elections. The crisis of Stalinist rule in Eastern Europe has encouraged those who would like to see a return to "normal" democracy.

Neither alternative holds the key for Zimbabwe's workers and peasants. The one party state would further strengthen Mugabe's authoritarian rule over the workers. "Normal" multi-party parliamentary democracy would still leave the decisive levers of power in the hands of the banks and multinationals and leave in place the capitalist control over the media and manipulation of the parties.

Betrayed

The fate of Zimbabwe in the 1980s underscores the truth of Trotsky's observation if the working class does not lead in the struggle for national independence, putting its own economic and political class demands to the fore, then it will be betrayed. Petit bourgeois parties of the ZANU or ZAPU type, while they can wage a guerilla war against colonialism, will not break with capitalism. They constantly force the workers to make concessions in order to retain the goodwill of the white minority. This too will be the case for the ANC in South Africa.

Might not South Africa—an imperialist nation, even richer than Zimbabwe in natural resources and highly industrialised—survive much more successfully than Zimbabwe? But South Africa faces even greater problems of poverty, dispossession, and inequality than pre-independence Zimbabwe. The "crisis of expectation" of the black masses will be huge. The Zimbabwe experience shows that a black leadership with a perspective of managing capitalism will turn on its supporters and employ ruthless repression to keep itself in power.

The Zimbabwean workers are suffering because they failed to find a leadership that could make their revolution permanent, combining national independence and majority rule with the expropriation of capitalism both in industry and on the land.

There and in South Africa that task still lies ahead. Without overthrowing capitalism, real independence from imperialism and the multinationals will continue to escape the workers. Workers and the rural poor must mobilise to seize the factories and the land, creating their own organs of power and putting in place a workers' and peasants' government. Such a government would have to embark on measures to plan production and land use for the benefit of all, not for the profits of the multinationals. Zimbabwe's masses and the black workers of South Africa, together with their neighbours, have the power to break the capitalists' stranglehold on their nations and release the enormous potential wealth of the region. ■



Mugabe with Nkomo (left)—ruling in the interests of the workers and peasants?

JAMES LARKIN was one of the Irish labour movement's most resolute and militant leaders. Whatever political weaknesses he had his life was an inspiration to revolutionaries. The re-publication of this biography gives us a welcome opportunity to see why.

Larkin was raised in working class Liverpool, amidst terrible poverty and deprivation. The key events of his life took place in Ireland, where, under the influence of revolutionary syndicalism, he led the 1913 tram workers' struggle, the Dublin lock-out.

Between 1905 and 1912 the cost of living in Dublin rose by 12%. According to contemporary reports the death rate in the city in this period was 27.6 per 1000, the highest of any city in Europe. The country had been ravaged and pauperised by centuries of British rule. Those who resisted were repressed by the brute force of Britain's colonial state forces, the Royal Irish Constabulary and the army.

It was in this context that Larkin set about organising the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union (ITGWU). He had been an official for the National Union of Dock Labourers (NUDL) but was sacked by that union. His offence was to have united the workers of the Falls and Shankhill roads (catholics and protestants) in an unofficial strike. The NUDL were having none of this fighting unity. In 1909 Larkin set up the ITGWU to organise the mass of unorganised Dublin workers.

Larkinism

He enjoyed tremendous success. By 1913 the Irish bosses and their British overlords trembled at the mention of "Larkinism". Between January and August of that year there were no less than thirty strikes. In Sligo workers' defence squads drove the police off the streets. A three month struggle against the City of Dublin Steam-packet Company broke the power of the big shipowners.

The only non-union employer left in Dublin was the United Tramway Company. It was owned by William Martin Murphy, a cruel capitalist bent on stopping the union from interfering with his regime of ex-

Nick Muir reviews:
James Larkin
by Emmet Larkin
Pluto Press

ploitation. The working day for tramworkers ran from 9 to 17 hours. To get a job with the company a new employee had to pay a £20 guarantee and work the first six weeks without pay.

Murphy circulated a document to each of his workers demanding that they pledge their loyalty to the company in the face of calls for a strike by Larkin and the ITGWU. On 26 August 1913, 700 tramworkers walked off the job. They immediately launched into a battle with scab trams.

Murphy had the backing of the state. James Connolly, another syndicalist leader, was immediately arrested. Larkin himself had to go into hiding. The police waded into the strikers, leaving two men dead. In an attack on a secret meeting organised by Larkin, the police ran riot and hospitalised some 500 workers.

The bosses saw the chance to smash "Larkinism" and united behind Murphy. A meeting of the Employers' Federation issued an ultimatum to workers to resign from the ITGWU. Twenty-eight other unions joined the ITGWU in defiance of this threat and by early September 25,000 workers were involved in the struggle.

Larkin had been caught by the police but was soon released on bail. He headed for Britain; not to escape from the struggle, but to rally mass support for it from British workers. His dynamism, his passionate commitment to the struggle, inspired rank and file workers everywhere. Railworkers in Liverpool, Birmingham, Crewe, Derby and Sheffield—10,000 of them in all—refused to handle any Dublin traffic or freight.

To build on this "solidarity Larkin and Connolly issued a joint proclamation to workers in Britain, appealing for rank and file action:

"We propose to carry the war into every section of the enemy's camp. Will you second us?"

Initially at least, British workers said "we will!" The action spread

Larkin and the Dublin workers



Irish Labour Party and TUC 1914 National Executive. James Larkin is seated 2nd from right. James Connolly standing on the left.

"I am for revolution. What do I care? They can only kill me and there are thousands more to come after me."

to South Wales, backed up by a strike. Liverpool's carters and water men followed suit, striking in support of the Dublin workers. A union official of the time declared:

"In all my experience I have never known a time when there has been manifested a desire to help any union in dispute as there is among dockers both in London and the provincial ports, towards their Dublin comrades."

The response of the bureaucrats of the British unions was less generous. The leader of the railworkers, Jimmy Thomas, forced an end to the ban on Dublin freight and conspired with the bosses to get militants sacked. Ramsey

MacDonald, later to lead the Labour Party, denounced the "wild revolutionary appeals of men like Mr James Larkin". A special conference of the TUC was finally convened only to pass a resolution from Ben Tillett declaring that:

"This conference deplors and condemns the unfair attacks made by men inside the trade union movement upon British trade union officials".

This was a slap in the face to Larkin and in many ways sealed the fate of the Dublin struggle.

The chance to win clearly existed. A Board of Trade Enquiry into the lock-out was favourable to the workers.

The employers signalled a willingness to negotiate, but on condition that Larkin was first removed from his union post. Even the *Times* in October called on the Dublin employers to settle. But the absence of official solidarity from Britain and the undermining of unofficial action by the TUC strengthened the bosses' resolve.

Scabs were brought in from Liverpool and Manchester and were armed by the bosses. In response to violent attacks by the scabs and the state forces, the Irish Citizen's Army (ICA) was formed as a workers' defence squad.

Soon all union meetings and processions were accompanied by ICA men, armed with hurley sticks. The ICA stood guard over the houses of workers threatened with eviction.

The red, red Robin

FELLOW TRAVELLER is a good political film. These days that is a rare commodity. It tells the story of a Hollywood script writer, Asa Kaufman, forced to flee the USA during the anti-communist witch-hunt of the 1950s. He settles in England and gets a job writing episodes of *Robin Hood* for commercial television.

Hollywood was hard hit by the witch-hunt. The House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) began investigating the movie studios in 1947. Even prior to the rise of Senator McCarthy, the reactionary figurehead of the red-baiting movement, it carried through a major purge.

Many writers, directors and actors found themselves blacklisted and out of work. Ten who refused to testify before the committee were fined or imprisoned. It did not really matter whether you were a communist. If you had been associated with any left wing cause you were automatically on the blacklist and tailed by the FBI. For years stars like Edward G Robinson were unable to get even minor film roles.

Arthur Merton reviews:
Fellow Traveller
Directed by Phillip Saville

In the film Asa Kaufman is an ex-communist, still sympathetic to, but increasingly cynical about the cause. He is not cynical enough to testify against friends, but is no longer sufficiently committed to risk prison. England is the solution.

Through flashbacks and dream sequences the world of the left wing Hollywood intelligentsia, one that produced many of North America's most socially aware films in the 1930s and 1940s, is shown falling apart.

Kaufman himself has moved from party activism to the psychologist's couch. He cannot write under the constraints of the McCarthyite regime, and is constantly tormented by the dilemma of whether or not to testify. An FBI man dominates his dreams.

Here is the Hollywood of the 1950s, rigidly controlled by a thought police every bit as vicious as the "communist"

regimes portrayed in cold war classics like *The Red Danube* and *The Iron Curtain*.

Kaufman's anxiety at the collapse of his life in the USA is transformed into guilt at having run away from it. In losing his will to fight has he lost his will to write? This emotional torment is heightened when he learns that his best friend has committed suicide after testifying before the HUAC. Clifford Byrne, a dashing hero in many films Kaufman scripted, escapes McCarthyism by shooting himself.

The temptation to portray England as the easy escape from anti-communism is thankfully avoided by the British director and his script writer, Michael Eaton. England is superficially quaint. The aristocratic buffer who employs Kaufman is no right wing avenger. He simply believes that England's weather is unsuited to communism. The left itself is portrayed as a collection of naive, relatively nice, if sometimes anti-American, peace lovers.

Behind this pleasant façade, however, stand the CID who harass Kaufman. Their links and collaboration with the FBI are made clear. British tolerance will only go so far. And the cramping morality of English life is brilliantly illustrated by the landlady who throws Kaufman out for having a woman in his room.

Tension is maintained by Kaufman's attempt to settle ac-

counts with his past and his present. Can he rekindle his passion for social justice, allay his guilt and fear and fathom the mystery of his friend's death and apparent treachery? He finally succeeds in all of these quests, though it would spoil it for readers to say how.

Revealing that Robin Hood plays a part in this doesn't spoil anything. Kaufman uses the character to purge his own anxieties and project a positive solution to life—Robin rights wrongs, fights injustice and defeats the Sheriff of Nottingham, the personification of McCarthyism's cruelty. To those who remember the series all of this will re-awaken fond memories. To those who don't the point is clear anyway.

It may seem far fetched to have a left wing writer rescuing himself by writing episodes of a children's programme. Yet the film is based on fact. An ex-communist voluntary exile from McCarthyism was one of the writers of the old ITV series.

In reminding us of this fact the film stands as a powerful indictment of witch-hunts. By uncovering every moment of Kaufman's pain and torment during his exile it gives meaning to the words of Dalton Trumbo, one of the writers imprisoned during the McCarthy era:

"The blacklist was a time of evil and no one on either side who survived it came through untouched by evil."■

Combativity

Despite this impressive display of combativity the lack of solidarity proved decisive to the fate of the struggle. The longer the strike lasted, the more ferocious the police attacks became. With less and less prospect of victory, strikers grew demoralised and began to drift back to work. On 30 January 1914 Larkin conceded:

"We are beaten, we will make no bones about it."

There is no doubt about the flaws in Larkin's politics as a result of his adherence to syndicalism. As with Connolly, it left him with too narrow a view of revolutionary struggle, largely confining it to the trade unions, and left him ill-equipped to offer a revolutionary solution to the national question in Ireland.

Nevertheless, his working class resilience, his energy as a class fighter and his struggle against the trade union bureaucrats, the "double-dyed traitors to their class", as he called them, were all qualities that militants today should strive to imitate. The final word on his intransigence should be left to him:

"I am for revolution. What do I care? They can only kill me and there are thousands more to come after me."■

NAGORNO KARABAKH

National rights
and wrongs

IN 1921 Stalin, then Commissar for the Nationalities in the Bolshevik government, ruled that the autonomous region of Nagorno Karabakh be transferred from the control of the Armenian Republic to that of Azerbaijan. Nearly seventy years later Gorbachev's contradictory decisions have fuelled armed conflict between the two republics. The issue that sparked off the dispute is that of control of Nagorno Karabakh.

A mountainous area in the west of Azerbaijan, Nagorno Karabakh has a population of only 160,000. The 1979 census showed that 76% of its people were Armenian.

When the Armenian and Azerbaijani Soviet republics were created in 1920 the sovereignty of Nagorno Karabakh was already a matter of dispute. Neither republic was based on a pre-existing defined national territory. Azerbaijan had only existed as an administrative unit for a brief period during the First World War under Turkish influence. It was the British who, during the civil war between the Bolsheviks and the reactionary imperialist-backed Whites, insisted that Nagorno Karabakh be part of Azerbaijan in order to prevent it being part of Armenia which was seen as more pro-Bolshevik.

Defeat

However, after the defeat of the Whites and the withdrawal of the British from Baku which they had occupied and in which they had conducted an anti-communist terror campaign, Azerbaijan became a Soviet Republic before either Armenia or Georgia. It was then, whilst Armenia was not yet a Soviet republic, that Lenin insisted Nagorno Karabakh be handed back to Armenia as that was clearly the wish of its population. Once Armenia itself became a Soviet Republic in 1920, the Bolsheviks agreed that a commission should decide upon the status of the region, "guided by the ethnic composition and wishes of the population".

The Azeris then withdrew their claim to the area until 1921 when, under pressure from Turkey, the matter was again raised. The Bolshevik Caucasian Bureau also decided that Armenia should retain control, but Stalin, in a manner anticipating his future methods, overturned that decision the next day and Nagorno Karabakh became an autonomous region within the Republic of Azerbaijan.

Gorbachev's reforms have raised the issue of sovereignty again by on the one hand opening up political discussion and allowing the expression of dissent, and on the other fostering nationalism through the *perestroika* (restructuring) which places increasing responsibilities for self-sufficiency and planning at a republic level. The weakening of the central economic dynamism of the planned economy over twenty years has pushed the republics to seek a way out of stagnation by a drive for greater and greater autonomy.

In Nagorno Karabakh during 1987 the opportunities provided by *glasnost* (openness) led to calls on the Supreme Soviets of Armenia and Azerbaijan to transfer the region to Armenian

control. A petition in November 1987 calling for this transfer was signed by 90% of the total adult population of the region. However, the Armenian majority came up against a contradiction in the Soviet constitution. Article 70 states that the population of a region has the right to decide which republic shall govern it; Article 78 states that a republic's boundaries must not be contravened. Gorbachev has remained intransigent in defence of the latter—he ruled that any change of the borders was out of the question.

In early 1988 demonstrations and mass meetings in Nagorno Karabakh continued to press their justified claim. The ruling bureaucracy in both Azerbaijan and Armenia seized the opportunity to fuel national unrest as a diversion from the growing social and economic crisis facing both republics.

In Azerbaijan one third of the population live below the official poverty line compared with 12.6% nationally, and unemployment is high at 26%. There is 73% unemployment and underemployment in Baku itself. This despite the fact that the region produces massive amounts of oil and has been a key to the wealth of the Soviet Union. Like many other republics Azerbaijan has been squeezed dry by bureaucrats from Moscow.

In Armenia the ruling party bureaucrats have failed to tackle similar social problems. The tragic earthquake of 1988 revealed astonishing incompetence and corruption when the rescue and rebuilding operations began. Thus the Armenian party had every interest in inflaming a mass campaign to "recover" Karabakh.

In response to the calls from Nagorno Karabakh for transfer in early 1988, the Azerbaijani Party bosses threatened that 100,000 Azeris would occupy the region to prevent its secession. This statement encouraged extreme nationalist groups and physical attacks on Armenians began—widely believed to be assisted by leading sections of the party bureaucracy itself. Azeris went to Nagorno Karabakh to "teach the Armenians a lesson", followed by the brutal pogrom of Armenians in the town of Sumgait in Azerbaijan during which 32 were killed. This in turn heightened Armenian nationalism and led to reprisals.

Exodus

In the aftermath there was a mass exodus of the minority population from each republic. By the end of 1989 an estimated 200,000 Azeris has fled from Armenia to Baku, with more than 300,000 Armenians leaving Azerbaijan. This migration has intensified social problems. In Baku

shanty towns ring the city occupied by tens of thousands of unemployed and homeless Azeri refugees from Armenia. On the other side those Armenians who fled Baku in 1988 went straight to a republic about to be devastated by the earthquake.

In August 1989 Moscow intervened to try and quell the growing rebellions in Nagorno Karabakh where mass strike action had been underway since May. Moscow imposed temporary control over the region. The Armenians had by then established their own "Congress of authorised representatives of Nagorno Karabakh" with an elected Council which declared that its decisions were "binding over the entire territory of Nagorno Karabakh".

In Baku the response to Moscow's intervention was hostile. The emerging but still illegal Azeri Popular Front organised strikes and demonstrations calling for the resolution of the Nagorno Karabakh problem. A rally of 100,000 supported the Popular Front and the Azeris blockaded Nagorno Karabakh and Armenia through disruption of rail and road transport.

Recognise

By September the Baku Communist Party and Soviet leadership was forced to recognise the Popular Front, ending local strikes but not the blockade. "Some 87% of the freight earmarked for Armenia comes into the republic on the Azerbaijan railroad", reported an Armenian minister.

"As of 10 Sept, about 250 trains had been abandoned. An extremely grave situation has developed in the republic. There is no automobile or diesel fuel, transport vehicles are standing idle, and even first aid vehicles can't get fuel."

The next month the Supreme Soviet in Baku adopted a law which reasserted its control over Nagorno Karabakh, stipulating that only a referendum of the whole republic could change the territory. This again appeased the Popular Front, but ultimately only increased their support as it was clear that the ruling bureaucracy had no alternative course of action to recommend.

The control of Nagorno Karabakh had come to symbolise the struggle of each nationality for its own "independence". Calls for total independence from the USSR had not been the rallying point for the national movements up to this point, whatever Gorbachev may say in his justification for sending in the troops. Nor has the call for an Islamic republic of Azerbaijan been a central demand of any but a minority of the Popular Front.

The danger exists, however, that calls for secession will now grow in both republics as Gorbachev and the military increase the stakes by their inept and brutal vacillation between repression and offers of negotiation. Dangerous as the nationalist hysteria is for them, controlling it with tanks is easier than trying to tackle unemployment, declining social provision, the land hunger of the Azeris in Nakhichevan or to grasp the nettle as to whether to grant Armenia and Azerbaijan the right to secede.

The pogroms of Armenians in Sumgait and more recently in Baku are widely believed to have been incited by members of the local bureaucracy, even if gangs of extreme nationalists carried out much of the violence.

Nationalism thrives where social and economic conditions deny people a basic decent standard of living. It is fueled by bureaucratic incompetence which offers no way out of the current crisis. People

Two years of clashes in the Soviet Republics of Armenia disputed territory took a dramatic turn last month with Armenians in Baku, armed warfare along the border and intervention of the Soviet Army. **Clare Heath** examines conflict over Nagorno Karabakh, and why the troops



Soviet troops on the streets of Azerbaijan

Conflict in the Caucasus

who feel their national rights, culture or autonomy have been trampled on can be led, whether by Stalinists or reactionary religious nationalists, into attacking another nationality rather than turn on their own rulers.

In the Caucasus this is precisely what has occurred. The people of Nagorno Karabakh have an incontestable right to secede from Azerbaijan and to become part of Armenia or become a separate republic within Transcaucasia if they wish. They have clearly expressed their desire to secede and this must be supported by all democrats let alone socialists.

To rule this out in advance, as Gorbachev has done, merely inflames Armenian nationalism, leading to the growth of some groups within the Republic calling for total independence from the USSR. In addition, Gorbachev's botched attempt to calm the situation, by imposing Moscow's direct rule over Nagorno Karabakh for nearly a year, has simply stimulated indignation in Azerbaijan, where people felt that he was not defending what he himself recognised as their territory.

Nationalities within the USSR should have the right to self-determination, up to and including the right to leave the USSR if they choose. However, in exercising this right, one nationality cannot be allowed to

trample on the national rights of others. Armenians and Azerbaijanis are clearly nationalities but with disputed territorial claims. Nagorno Karabakh is, by the majority of its people, Armenian and should be part of that republic or an independent nation if the Armenians choose to secede.

The Azerbaijani struggle has not hitherto been a genuine democratic struggle against Moscow but an attempt to use force to retain within their republic, and to assert physical control of, a region whose population is not Azeri. It is a reactionary struggle for national privileges, not a progressive one against national oppression (despite the many real grievances against Moscow that the Azeri's undoubtedly have).

Aspirations

The Azeri speaking people of the whole region doubtlessly have very genuine national grievances and aspirations. Some ten million Azeris live in Iran where they enjoy little or no self-government, where their language and culture are ignored and discriminated against. Similar conditions affect the smaller number of Azeris in Turkey. Yet the Stalinist and popular front nationalists place little or no stress on the struggle for a united and independent Azerbaijan



As Poland's government strides boldly along the road to capitalism, workers are beginning to resist attacks on their living standards. Harry Wall looks at the latest austerity measure, and Mike Evans considers the programme put forward by a key group on the Polish left, the PSP(DR).

THE POLISH Socialist Party (Democratic Revolution) [PSP(DR)] held its conference in Wroclaw on 9 and 10 December 1989. The PSP(DR) had 168 paid up members at the beginning of the Congress, though 500 people have applied to join it. It adopted a constitution that allows for the rights of factions and tendencies within the party and it adopted a formal party programme entitled *The Self-Management Alternative*.

An observer who attended the conference described the different tendencies present thus:

"At the conference itself there were three positions apparent. There was a very small right wing—mainly represented by Andrzej Dorminijczak, who declared his intention of leaving the party after the congress—which was militantly anti-Trotskyist and more or less on a left social democratic line. In the centre was the majority, which supported the original draft of the programme which came from Piotr Ikonowicz and Cezary Mizejewski. On the left, mainly based in Wroclaw but also a couple of delegates from Warsaw, was a more openly revolutionary Marxist position."

It is difficult to tell the extent to which the Wroclaw minority and their best known representative, Josef Piniar, influenced the programme. One thing is certain. The adopted programme of the PSP(DR) is not a revolutionary programme. Of course allowances must be made for organisations which are emerging from illegality in conditions of isolation, of acute material shortages and where the traditions of Marxism, Leninism and Trotskyism have been discredited or suppressed. Revolutionaries in western Europe should seek to open a dialogue with the comrades of these organisations. But frankness—on both sides—should be welcomed.

Tradition

The PSP(DR) programme starts by locating itself in the tradition of the historic PPS—excluding the Marxist tradition of Rosa Luxemburg, Julian Marchlewski, Leo Jogisches and Adolf Warski. Instead it identifies with social patriotic figures like Ignacy Daszynski. In short the PSP(DR) identifies itself with the nationalist and reformist tradition of Polish socialism, not with the internationalist and revolutionary one. The greatest weakness of the programme is also embedded in the party's name which appears in parentheses—Democratic Revolution. The programme proclaims:

"The PSP(DR) is a party of the Democratic Revolution. This is a process of social emancipation from below, which will lead to a fusion of parliamentary democratic forms with self-managing ones."

The PSP(DR) has inherited the confused conception of the early 1980s Solidarnosc that a social (if not a socialist) economy can be maintained by workers' self-management in the enterprises and a parliamentary democratic system at the level of the state. The PSP(DR) explicitly rejects the idea of the state as a working class instrument for building socialism. Its programme talks about:

"... the Self-Managing Republic—a state which does not express the interests of any social group, but is rather a framework providing law and services to all".



PSP(DR): A democratic revolution?

The conception of the "democratic revolution" is that once the *nomenklatura*, as it calls the bureaucratic caste, has fallen and due to the absence of a "domestic finance oligarchy" it will be possible to create "a dynamic state of equilibrium between the conflicting interest groups" of which society is composed. Thus the PSP(DR) sees the only way to preserve political and economic freedom is by a series of countervailing powers. Here the discrediting of Marxism by Stalinism and the inrush of various bourgeois sociological notions produce a completely non-class—even an anti-class—analysis.

Thus whilst the programme is vigorous and effective in denouncing the pro-capitalist privatisation intentions of the Mazowiecki government it has only a utopian model to pose against it. Against the present government it pointedly predicts:

"... either there will be Stalinist reaction, reversing the reform process, or the *nomenklatura* will, together with the Solidarity elite, create a new ruling oligarchy on the basis of representing the interests of foreign capital. The logic of opening the economy and joining the international capitalist market means a place for Poland amongst the countries of the Third World."

But what is the real concrete alternative to this strategy? The PSP(DR) correctly wants to see the "separation of Solidarity [the trade union] from the state administration" and the "rebirth of internal union democracy" as a means of launching a fight to defend workers' rights and interests. It wants to see workers' councils take over the factories and run production.

But when it comes to the state level, the PSP(DR) has no answer beyond what it calls the enriching of parliamentary democracy. The parliament should have a "political chamber", the Sejm, elected by

universal suffrage but alongside it to deal with economic matters there should be a Chamber of Self-Management.

With regard to the law the programme calls for an independent and "self-organising" judiciary. Whilst one can understand the superficial attraction of judges not under the control of the party of the Stalinist bureaucracy, a self-appointing caste of judges—such as exists in Britain—is not independent at all but follows the strategic wishes of the ruling class.

As long as the state exists as an instrument of coercion with any police force and judges (i.e. the PSP(DR) envisages all of these as necessary) it will be a class state. The only question is—which class rules in this state. The PSP(DR) wants a classless state. This is simply a contradiction in terms—a vegetarian carnivore. It has never existed and can never exist.

Confusion

Likewise at the economic base of society, the level of the relations of production, all is confusion. Firstly the programme praises the market as "the least arbitrary instrument in relation to the real functioning of the social mechanism of the division of labour" but immediately adds:

"Unfortunately this mechanism leads to uneven accumulation of capital and the appearance of monopolies which negate the virtues of this mechanism. From an instrument of equivalence of exchange between different groups of producers it becomes the instrument to impose conditions of exchange by the strongest partner—the monopolist."

The planned economy on the other hand treats the economy like one huge enterprise and so decisions on the social division of labour are taken either by an arbitrary decision or vote—thus subordinating the needs of one set of producers to another. The answer

Beating inflation by raising prices

POLAND'S FIRST "non-communist" government since the war opened the new decade with a series of measures which attacked, first and foremost, the workers who brought it to power. The Solidarnosc-Polish United Workers Party cabinet under Tadeusz Mazowiecki announced a round of massive price increases aimed at "cutting inflation", which is running at 50% for January alone.

No, that's not a passage from *Alice in Wonderland*. The idea is to put up prices to "realistic", world market levels, to slash subsidies that kept them low and only to raise wages to cover 30% of these increases. Not surprisingly this plan to beat inflation was devised by the IMF. From La Paz to London and now to Warsaw their recipe is the same—slash workers' real wages, that's the way to beat inflation.

In Poland the price rises have been staggering: Coal—the main source of heating for most ordinary Poles—went up by 600%, electricity charges increased by nearly 500%, the price of petrol doubled.

The situation has become so desperate that taxi drivers in some cities, whose fares doubled in a matter of weeks, are contemplating striking to force them back down again! At current rates their trade has dwindled to almost nothing.

Queues, the bane of life under the old Stalinist system, have virtually disappeared. But they have not been replaced with plenty. Prices of all but the most basic foodstuffs have shot beyond the purchasing power of ordinary Polish workers.

Ham can now be had off the shelves instantly—at 60,000 zlotys per kilo. In the 1970s 60,000 zlotys would have bought you a small car! The current round of austerity measures, and there are more planned, are designed to introduce Poland to capitalism with a "short, sharp shock".

The argument of finance minister Laszek Balcerowicz and his

western advisors is that the government must act decisively now—no matter how painful it is—whilst it still enjoys the support of the vast majority of Poles. But the problem for Mazowiecki and the government is that anything they do will hit straight at their own main base, eroding the credibility of the government with Solidarity workers.

Current plans envisage cuts in real income of 25% by the end of March. In the same period 400,000 workers will be forced to sign on for the newly created dole as "inefficient" plants are closed.

A head-on confrontation between workers and the government seems inevitable. As Mazowiecki himself has said in an attempt to forestall unrest:

"The success of this year's economic policy depends to a great extent on whether we hold wage increases within planned frames. If this barrier breaks there will be no stop to price increases."

Already the working class has hit back. Miners in five pits in the Silesian coalfield struck in January when they compared their reduced wages to the increased prices. Up to 35,000 walked out and, in an echo of the events of 1980-81, locked out their union officials. Only this time it was not the old Stalinist bureaucrats who caught it in the neck, it was the local and regional Solidarity reps who were barred from their own offices. Even the previously discredited "official" trade union federation OPZZ has managed to regain enough credibility to put itself at the head of the strikers in at least one pit.

The austerity drive is not going to solve the crisis in the Polish economy. If it succeeds at all it will merely transform the acute crisis of a bureaucratically planned economy into the permanent crisis of an indebted capitalist semicolonial of the EC. Poland's workers have every interest in stopping Mazowiecki dead in his tracks. Now is the time to do it. ■

is a mixed system which "confers sovereignty on the producers by endowing them with ownership rights", the "break up of the state sector into many sectors including a private one" and to co-ordinate it all "a market controlled from below by institutionalised mechanisms of social control [which] will make possible equivalent exchange in the framework of a social division of labour."

These ideas are not new. They owe an enormous debt to Pierre Joseph Proudhon. The spirit of the father of anarchism hovers over this programme which praises the market for its spontaneous organising of exchange of equivalents between equal and sovereign producers and devising means to prevent the "bad side" of the free market from leading to monopoly.

The notion of workers' self-management without democratically centralised planning is a nonsense—especially if it exists alongside parliament. In the latter the bourgeois parties like the christian democratised Solidarity can gain the authority to favour the monopolists and bankrupt the workers' self-managed enterprises. After all the Sejm represents the "whole people" or "universal democracy" whereas the Self-Management Chamber will represent only the professional interests of the producers.

Without an open recognition that the state is a workers' state, without founding its armed power and its justice on the workers' class

organs (workers' councils, like the inter-factory councils of 1980), without subordinating the market to a democratically drawn up and implemented central plan, any hope of the emancipation of the working class is sheer fantasy.

There are many glaring omissions from the programme. In a catholic country where the church is seeking to outlaw abortion, nothing is said about women's rights and the struggle for liberation. Indeed no mention is made of the reactionary role of the church. No demand is raised for the separation of church and state.

In conclusion, whilst the PSP(DR) clearly sets itself against the present austerity drive of Mazowiecki and condemns the restorationist goal, it has no clear tactics for resistance and it has no goal for working class power. Like all utopian programmes its combination of syndicalism at factory level with an idealised (purified) market and parliamentarianism will turn out in the light of common day to be social democracy—reformism. The alternative is to break with the syndicalism, idealised bourgeois democracy and Proudhonism, overcome Polish nationalism and turn to the programme of unfalsified Bolshevism. ■

For copies of the programme of the PSP(DR) and other conference documents, write to: PSP(DR), The Basement, 92 Ladbroke Grove, London W11



the LRCI

NEWS FROM THE SECTIONS

LRCI

The Trotskyist Manifesto is published

IN JANUARY the programme of the LRCI was published in English. It could hardly appear at a more opportune moment. In Eastern Europe and the USSR Stalinism is writhing in its death agony. The clear and unfalsified voice of Trotskyism is needed now more than ever.

Its title, *The Trotskyist Manifesto*, is obviously a scandal and an offence to the myriad of centrist "currents" burrowing within social democracy. It no doubt grates the nerves of the sects that proclaim themselves "parties" with a few dozen cadres. How dare we produce a programme, how dare we claim to have produced a "new transitional programme". Sacrilege! Overweening pride!

These are the reactions we have experienced and will continue to experience. Good! We expected our programme to be a stumbling block to inveterate centrists and sectarians alike.

More serious comrades ask: "Surely, you don't mean that this is the Transitional Programme; that it replaces Trotsky's *Death Agony of Capitalism*." Surely it is only a document up for discussion?"

Of course, this programme does not replace the historic *Transitional Programme* any more than Trotsky's work replaced all the historic programmes before it. Of course it is for discussion. It is not an ultimatum thrown at the head of the world's labour movement. But it is our programme. It is where we stand. We reject with contempt the view—mockingly summarised by Trotsky: "Here I stand! But with a little effort I might be persuaded to stand elsewhere."

We recognise that the LRCI's Manifesto, like the LRCI itself, is a weapon to create a future programme and a future party that will have the allegiance of the entire proletarian vanguard worldwide.

To revolutionary workers, however—in the semi-colonial countries ground down by the IMF, in the countries where Stalinist dictatorships are disintegrating—the programme's name is straightforward and direct enough; this is the Manifesto of the Trotskyists, those who refuse to conceal their views and aims.

Our Manifesto says to the workers of Eastern Europe and the USSR: break with Stalinism, break with the bourgeois opposition, break with social democracy. Build new revolutionary communist parties and an international. And to start this task *join the LRCI*.

Copies of the Manifesto are available priced £3.50 inc P&P from: Workers Power, BCM 7750, London WC1N 3XX. Make cheques payable to Workers Power

POUVOIR OUVRIER

New newspaper and anti-racist campaign

THE NEW issue of Pouvoir Ouvrier (number 17) is out now, with articles on the crisis in the DDR, South Africa, the political revolution in the Stalinist states and on the Force Ouvrière trade union federation. A two page polemic deals with the crisis inside Pierre Lambert's Parti Communiste Internationaliste.

The article traces the degeneration of Lambertist centrism to its current project of building reformist parties and a reformist "workers' international". At the same time these subtle dialecticians are calling for "a conference of the sections of the Fourth International which will discuss the reclamation of the Fourth International". Pouvoir Ouvrier also deals with the so-called "head scarves affair" which provided a platform for French racists at the end of last year, and in particular showed the weakness of Lutte Ouvrière in the struggle against racism.

For their part members and supporters of Pouvoir Ouvrier in Brittany have been at the forefront in organising local youth and the labour movement in the fight against the Front National, the recent high-point of which was an "anti-racist day" organised at the end of January.

Copies of Pouvoir Ouvrier are available from Workers Power price 60p including P&P

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

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

Campaign for Solidarity with Workers in the Eastern Bloc

Affiliate your trade union, trades council, Labour Parties etc.
Trade unions and constituency Labour Parties £10.00
Student Labour Clubs, wards £5.00

Organising c'ttee: Sat 24 Feb, 6-00pm, LSE near Holborn Tube, London
Meetings: Speaker from: Polish Socialist Party (Democratic Revolution
Thursday 1 February, Leeds Polytechnic Student Union, 7-30
Friday 2 February, Manchester Town Hall, 7-30
Saturday 3 February, 10-00-4-00, Sheffield Centre Against Unemployment, West St.
Speakers from PPS(RD), Chinese Solidarity Campaign, Czech student

Nicaragua goes to the polls on 25 February for the second time since the FSLN led revolution overthrew the Somoza dictatorship. In the 1984 elections the Sandinistas, represented by their presidential candidate Daniel Ortega, received 67% of the popular vote. In Nicaragua in 1989 no one, not even the FSLN, is predicting such a crushing victory over the opposition. John McKee explains why.

Sandinistas on the defensive

SINCE 1984 Nicaragua has suffered a growing economic crisis. The combined effects of the US backed Contra war and the international economic blockade led by the USA, have virtually wrecked the economy. In 1987 inflation was 20,000%. By 1988 it had reached 36,000% while GDP fell 9% that year.

Living standards of the working class and the poor peasants have fallen dramatically in this period. One survey has suggested that real wages have fallen over 90% since 1981. The policies of the Sandinista government have contributed to this decline which is one reason why all the opinion polls show a major slump in their popularity.

Austerity

Since it became apparent in 1986-87 that the Contras were finished as a real threat to the FSLN government, it has been attempting to "restore" the economy at the expense of the workers and peasants. A series of austerity programmes have been introduced, most notably in February 1988 and June 1989.

Subsidies have been slashed, massive devaluations of the currency introduced and tens of thousands of state employees sacked. Moreover, in February 1989 it was announced that land expropriations, the source of redistributed land for the peasants, would cease.

In a June 1989 speech announcing the latest austerity measures President Ortega was quite candid about their function. The London based *Latin American Weekly Reports* (6.7.89) says that he warned wage earners that the "true value of their salaries would be even lower at the end of the year". While these measures could appear to follow "a liberal trend, an IMF trend" he quickly added that there was a difference.

In Argentina and Brazil, such measures were introduced by regimes which exploited the workers; but in Nicaragua the wealthy did not hold power. Taxes were high and this helped to distribute wealth. Certainly, he suggested, there were "striking differences in wealth" in Nicaragua but these were the result of the government's "commitment to the mixed economy, a system which promotes economic differences".

Here in a nutshell was the Sandinista programme summed up—a social democratic commitment to a mixed economy capitalism, which, in an impoverished semi-colonial country, blockaded by imperialism, can only mean increasing impoverishment for the masses. While the workers pay for the crisis through austerity, the bourgeoisie receives massive subsidies to "keep production going"—\$500 million in 1987. Of course it does no such thing, preferring to spirit its dollars out of the country as fast as it receives them.

The FSLN's programme of aus-

terity at home has been complemented by a policy of compromise abroad, in the hope that this would allow it to rely on the good offices of the other Central American presidents and the US Democrats to blunt the Reagan/Bush offensive. The Arias or Central American Peace Plan largely consisted of a series of concessions by the Sandinistas.

They promised to cease aiding the FMLN in El Salvador, to release the hated Somoza national guards imprisoned for their atrocities, to "re-integrate" the Contras into national life by providing land and work for these killers, and allowing the bourgeois opposition to freely produce its US financed papers. All this was done, on the promise that the Contras would be demobilised, first by May 1989 then, when this failed to materialise, by mid-December 1989.

The FSLN loyally fulfilled its part of the agreements. At the Central American presidential Summit at San Jose in December 1989, Ortega dutifully declared his support for El Salvador's ARENA President, Cristiani, in the face of the FMLN insurrection, calling on the FMLN to cease hostilities forthwith. Block releases of National Guard and Contra prisoners reduced the number held from 3,500 in 1986 to 1,500 in April 1989.

The US government in return did its best to subvert the agreements. An estimated 4,000 Contra troops left their bases in Honduras in August and September last year, taking advantage of a unilaterally declared ceasefire by the FSLN, to launch a campaign to disrupt voter registration. The US administration continued to provide its "non-lethal" aid to these troops inside Nicaragua. Over fifty militia and FSLN troops were to be killed before the Nicaraguan government declared the ceasefire at an end in October and went after the Contra forces.

Opposition

Meanwhile the election campaign got under way with the formation of the main opposition bloc, a group of 14 parties, called the National Opposition Union (UNO). This bloc chose as its presidential candidate Violeta Barrios Chamorro, wife of a leading bourgeois opposition figure murdered by Somoza. She was a member of the popular front Government of National Reconstruction in 1979 when the FSLN shared power with important sectors of the bourgeoisie. Chamorro is the owner of *La Prensa*, the main opposition daily, well known to be in receipt of ample US government dollars. Naturally it is a fervent mouthpiece for the Contras.

The UNO itself will not be short of funds. The US Congress has allocated \$5 million to the "National Endowment for Democracy" (NED) to funnel to this organisation. The NED was set up during

the Reagan years precisely for this purpose.

The National Opposition Union has demanded changes in the electoral laws, access to an independent TV station, a temporary suspension of conscription and the right to vote of Nicaraguans abroad. It included not only the centre right parties, like the Nicaraguan Conservative Party and Independent Liberals but also the two Stalinist parties—the Nicaraguan Socialist Party and the Nicaraguan Communist Party.

This bloc distinguished itself early on in the campaign by meeting with the Contras in Guatemala where they agreed that they should remain armed to ensure "there was no electoral fraud". Nicaraguan papers carried photographs of the leader of the Nicaraguan Stalinists, Eli Altamirano, and the Contra Commander in Chief, Enrique Bermudez, hugging one another in solidarity; a sight the Sandinista press rightly described as a "Blood Wedding". Six months later the Contras blew up and killed 19 young Sandinista soldiers on the last day of voter registration.

Disillusion

It was not long before UNO started falling apart. Both Stalinist parties were expelled along with the Social Christian Party for wanting to run independent lists of candidates. Nevertheless the fact that the UNO, despite its Contra links, could rate 18% of the votes in an opinion poll in October 1989 compared with 36% for Ortega and 28% undecided, shows the danger which exhaustion and disillusion are creating within the masses.

There is a crying need in the Nicaraguan elections for a real workers' alternative to the popular frontist strategy of the Sandinistas that has brought the revolution almost to its knees. Such an alternative, embodied in a revolutionary Trotskyist party would sharply counterpose a workers' answer to the crisis against the FSLN programme of defending the mixed economy and ever more calls for austerity and sacrifice. It would centre around demands for the expropriation of the capitalists and big farmers who are sabotaging the economy; it would mobilise the workers to seize the factories and plants, and the peasants to occupy the big farms—land to those who work it!

It would organise organs of struggle and control—workers' councils in the place of the bureaucratically controlled CDS's and the top down Sandinista "trade union" the CST. Above all it would follow the strategy of permanent revolution, confronting the imperialist blockade by fighting to extend the revolution to the rest of Central America, extending all aid and support it could to the FMLN and other liberation forces. ■

S EVEN MONTHS after the massacres of Tiananmen Square it is clear that the Chinese bureaucracy has neither fully crushed its opponents amongst the workers and students nor resolved the intense factional struggle within its own ranks.

Falling industrial production throughout the autumn months, small scale but courageous protests in the universities and in the re-opened Tiananmen Square, the appearance of slogans urging the workers and students to "imitate Romania", are powerful proof that the repression has muffled but not completely silenced the hatred felt for the butchers who rule China today.

The official figures for the casualties of repression, some three thousand arrests and less than twenty executions, massively underestimate the real toll. But the absence of a thoroughgoing purge of the party or a trial of key figures like Zhao Ziyang, indicate that though the "hardliners" have gained enormously in influence they are not yet able to finally settle accounts with their foes inside or outside the bureaucracy.

The absence of a decisive turn in policy results partly from Deng Xiaoping continuing as the party's paramount leader. In order to lead the clampdown Deng was obliged to ally himself with forces hostile to his basic economic programme. Even before the eruption of the Democracy Movement Deng had been obliged to adopt a series of "conservative" modifications to his original marketising programme. From September 1988 official policy was to restrain the runaway growth of the private sector, curb inflation and re-establish firmer control of foreign trade.

The radical marketisation policies adopted since 1978 had produced a profound crisis. Agriculture, which had received a massive boost when the peasantry were unshackled from the commune system, now suffered declining growth rates. The greater profitability of producing crops for industry or export led to a fall in food output.

Polarised

The polarised growth of a rich peasantry and the rural poor threatened social stability in the countryside. In industry enterprise autonomy led to conflict over scarce resources, to inflation, corruption and to a dislocation of production as a whole. At the same time foreign debt spiraled. Hence Deng's turn.

But Deng proved unable to implement these policies. To the managerial and intellectual strata he had encouraged, the shift marked renewed bureaucratic party interference. They obstructed its implementation.

Although Deng apparently intended to repress the symptoms of the crisis while continuing with the same basic economic policy, his action served to alienate the most influential agents of that policy. Discontent amongst the managers, economists, technical intelligentsia and the already developed embryo of an entrepreneurial capitalist class sparked a struggle which split the bureaucracy and fuelled the Democracy Movement.

To suppress that movement, the dominant Deng faction had to call on the army, whose central role in policy-making had greatly diminished during "marketisation". This reliance on the army led to a corresponding increase in the influence within the bureaucracy of the supporters of a return to centralised command planning.

At the end of November, a working conference and plenum of the

Central Committee adopted a policy of economic retrenchment designed to overcome the severe dislocation created by the market reforms. Officially, this is only a continuation of the policy adopted last year, but it is actually an attempt to go back to a much greater degree of detailed central planning. Thus, for example, all energy production, freight transport, wholesaling and industrial raw material production are again subject to central planning and control.

Hard currency deals will return to central control, and enterprises that remain largely autonomous will face the discipline of state allocation of energy (coal, oil and electricity). Floating market prices will go in favour of state fixed prices, imports are to be centrally overseen and, finally, the party is to be re-instated as a decisive component of management at enterprise level. At the same time China continues to seek foreign capital investment for modernisation projects.

Package

But the Central Committee has not yet identified how the planning package will be implemented. Yao Yilin, who, along with premier Li Peng, drafted the proposals, has re-established the State Planning Commission.

However, the agencies to actually enforce its decisions at every level from Beijing to the factory floor either do not exist, as with the newly developed entrepreneurial enterprises, or face wholesale ideological opposition, as in many of the banks and economic ministries. On top of that, this style of central command planning was increasingly ineffective even when the economy was far less complex than it is today. Without the political mobilisation of the masses that was possible in the post-war reconstruction period it is almost certain to fail.

All that has been possible is a clampdown on small scale business. Western reports of three million firms going bankrupt since the Tiananmen massacre refer primarily to self-employed service industries (the noodle stalls, barbers, lorry drivers etc) that flourished in the first phase of marketisation but were actually often dysfunctional, very wasteful and associated with the black market. Nonetheless, their decline means an important increase in unemployment, both urban and rural.

Control of management decisions by means of the Party appears to be the only mechanism still left to the central planners. Certainly it is the only organisation that exists within every pore of society and thus has the opportunity to supervise and control. The problem for the Stalinists is two-fold.

Split

Firstly, the Party itself was split into hostile factions by the Democracy Movement. Secondly, the Party does not know what needs to be produced and is not itself a planning agency, even if it could be an enforcer of the planners' decisions. The workers and management alike will see any intervention by Party cadres as outside interference, leading to even greater alienation from it. This had fed discontent even before the wave of repression.

With this level of economic dislocation how long can the bureaucracy remain in power? Will Deng follow the path of his old friend Ceausescu?

The Chinese workers' state, unlike those of Eastern Europe, was

CHINA AFTER TIANANMEN SQUARE Retreat from the market

Over recent months the crisis of Stalinism has been most acutely shown in Eastern Europe and the USSR. But the ruling bureaucracy in China did not resolve its crisis with the massacre in Tiananmen Square last June. Peter Main explains the economic contradictions which the bureaucracy faces.



Marketisation did not point the way to solving China's economic problems

not created by an outside power. Stalinism's roots lie deep within Chinese society. It is, therefore, far more resilient than the parties in Poland, Czechoslovakia, etc. We should not expect it to collapse like them. Deng's market reforms were not universally popular; they did cause shortages and inflation and threaten the workforces of some core industries. They threatened many of the regions of the interior which had to watch while resources went to the coastal provinces engaged in foreign trade. In the short term, demagogic appeals against the speculators and imperialists will carry some weight. Further, only a relatively small part of the huge Chinese population was directly affected by the repression. Deng was right to say that the peasantry was still with him, and in a country with a peasant army that can be decisive.

Nonetheless, the hostile response of the urban population to the repression was remarkably uniform. This shows the breadth of disaffection within the working class in particular. It is hardly credible that any large scale movement will again believe that peaceful protest and hunger strikes could be sufficient to achieve systematic reform, even without the graphic examples of Eastern Europe, especially Romania. Bureaucratic central planning is not going to work. Indeed it will probably exacerbate the existing economic dislocation caused by marketisation and this will rekindle the arguments and divisions within the bureaucracy and party.

The imperialists have assessed the Tiananmen massacre and the whole Democracy Movement experience as evidence that the

agents of capitalist restoration in China are not yet strong enough for open backing against the regime. This is why the World Bank favours continued loans, why Nixon, Scowcroft and Eagleburger have been visiting Beijing and why commercial loans to China have continued. They calculate that their strategy of pouring in capital will continue to corrode the Stalinist apparatus and create the space within which some of their investment can grow as domestic capital.

Focus

Last year also showed, quite vividly, the extent of organisation of the overseas Chinese bourgeoisie. Without a clear focus for support within China this could not tip the balance against Li and Deng. The scattered Chinese bourgeoisie was, however, galvanised into a common purpose. With leadership in Hong Kong and Taiwan and mass support in South East Asia, Australia, Europe and the West Coast of the USA and Canada, it saw the opportunity for a realistic restorationist project for the first time in forty years. As a result links and organisations have probably emerged with a conscious, and now more practicable, aim of carrying out this project before the end of the century.

The prospects for China are, therefore, of continued instability in the economic sphere which will recreate the conditions for internecine warfare within the bureaucracy. The CCP is too much of a mass organisation to be able to conduct its arguments entirely in private.

In the cities, mass discontent

exists just below the surface. Although some elements of the political and trade union organisations that grew up last summer remain, repression and surveillance will probably prevent their coalescence and re-emergence as public organisations before a crisis in the bureaucracy erupts. As in all such situations of simmering discontent, some apparently external event will be needed to create the generalisation and synchronisation of nationwide protest and revolt.

The actual event matters little. It may be Deng's long awaited death. It may be the celebration of one or other anniversary. This next round will reveal that the student movement no longer has an "innocent", "democratic" character with no class content. The bourgeoisie will openly boast of its achievements, a late flowering of the Democracy Movement will develop much more rapidly and will draw sections of the students to their side.

Unarmed "people power", democratic pacifism, will make no conquests in China. The road to political revolution in China will be a hard and bloody one. The strong indigenous roots of Chinese Stalinism make this certain. The massive urban proletariat holds the key to victory. The weapon of the general strike and the working class' ability to forge an alliance with the poor and middle peasantry, especially their sons in the army, will prove vital to a strategy for revolution.

For its success the creation of a Chinese Trotskyist party is the first, second and third pre-requisite. Not a minute must be wasted in taking up this task. ■

THE SOCIALIST Workers Party (SWP) claims that the crisis in Eastern Europe is living proof that their theory of state capitalism is correct. Just one example of what they say about this crisis proves the opposite. Their theory is bankrupt.

According to the SWP the German Democratic Republic (GDR) is a capitalist country, created as a result of the expansion of the "Russian Empire". In *Socialist Worker Review* Lindsey German explains that an inter-imperialist deal divided Germany because the Allies:

"... believed this would keep Germany weak and therefore unable to compete economically with the other major capitalist powers."

Yet the SWP agree with those imperialists of old. German writes: "It is clear that socialists can have no truck with reunification on Kohl's terms. Although we are not in principle against dissolving present borders, we are not in favour of a stronger capitalist Germany."

The nod in the direction of some "principle" makes no difference to the reactionary conclusion drawn by the SWP. They are against the reunification of Germany. This is despite the fact that, if the GDR is a capitalist state and the product of an imperialist carve up, then it is an elementary democratic right of the German people to re-unite themselves.

Marxists do not oppose the unification of peoples who have been divided into two capitalist states, against their will, by imperialist powers. By what right does a British group of self-styled "internationalists" seek to deny the Germans their democratic rights? If the argument is that such divisions weaken capitalism why not go further and propose the division of other great imperialist powers, the USA, for example?

State capitalism is the source of this confusion and error. It has landed the SWP with a position



Clearing the way to a Fourth Reich?

SWP Against German reunification?

BY PETER MAIN

which could easily give left camouflage to a reactionary, anti-German chauvinism. It has led their German sister organisation, the Sozialistische Arbeitergruppe (SAG) to adopt the same position as some of the most conservative elements in the GDR, "No to a Fourth Reich!"

The programmatic consequences of the theory of state capitalism

were spelt out by the SWP leader Tony Cliff in his book, *Russia: a Marxist Analysis*. He concluded that the spontaneous revolution against the bureaucracy would:

"open the field for the free activity of all the parties, tendencies and groups in the working class. It will be the first chapter in the victorious proletarian revolution."

Of course, the overthrow of dictatorships can often be spontaneous. Eastern Europe demonstrates

institutions of a new ruling class. Yet every Marxist has, rightly, described them as revolutions.

The revolutions of 1848 in Europe were democratic revolutions against monarchical institutions and the "aristocracy of finance". The February Revolution of 1917 was no less of a revolution for having only installed the capitalist Provisional Government. This left untouched as much of the Tsarist state and Russian economy as it possibly could.

The RCP is correct to say in their monthly review that in Eastern Europe: "... a revolution must involve more than pulling down a wall or shooting a tyrant." (*Living Marxism* February 1990) Does the RCP genuinely believe that this was all that happened? Are its members blind to the fact that it was the action of millions that led to the wall being brought down; that a civil war led to the tyrant being shot?

In Eastern Europe the political revolution against Stalinism began in 1989. It has been stalled at its opening, democratic phase. Still it has achieved much. Key pillars of the bureaucratic order have been knocked down: the leading role of the party has been ended; a multiplicity of candidates in free elections has been won; the party militias and secret police forces have been demolished.

These are more than "the shooting of a tyrant" even if they are less than a full proletarian political revolution. Such a revolution will destroy completely the apparatus of Stalinist rule and erect the dictatorship of democratic workers' councils in its place.

To argue that in Romania a coup, not a revolution took place is utter foolishness. In a sense both took place. First came the revolution of the masses. It smashed the Ceausescu dynasty. This was followed immediately by a peaceful—even welcomed—coup by the army

this forcefully. Cliff, however, goes much further. He is arguing that state capitalist dictatorship has to be followed by a "chapter" of bourgeois democracy, a distinct stage in which the working class organises itself. At an unspecified later stage the "final chapter" comes which: "... can be written only by the masses, self-mobilised, conscious of socialist aims and the methods of their achievement and led by a revolutionary Marxist party."

These conclusions are being faithfully repeated by the SWP today. *Socialist Worker Review* (January 1990) devotes four pages to an explanation of why Eastern Europe today resembles the democratic revolutions of 1848. Socialists need only push democratic demands to their limits since this will lead to the masses "questioning the basic economic and social priorities of these societies".

Democratic stage

This method leads to a rigid separation of a "democratic stage" and a far off stage of socialist revolution. In the democratic stage the demands advanced by the SWP are limited to those the masses themselves are raising, those appropriate to the stage the masses are supposed to be at. Transitional demands, aimed at providing a bridge between the immediate struggles and needs of the masses and the socialist revolution, are scrupulously avoided. Or, put another way, they never think the working class is ready to confront the "big" political questions.

This is the methodology being applied by the SAG. It can be seen in their attitude to the proposed elections in March. Whilst they recognise that it is not elections that secure democratic rights they argue:

"As socialists [we] obviously and unreservedly support the demand for free elections because we regard them as an important means

for further mobilisation of the masses." (*Klassenkampf*, 77, December 1989)

Despite the continued political instability and mass mobilisations, no attempt is made to connect the workers' deeply held desire for some kind of democracy to revolutionary workers' democracy. The question of reunification is being raised ever more loudly through mass working class demonstrations, and there is growing support for the creation of a bourgeois style parliament. What is the programme of the SAG in this situation?

They believe that the plans of the bureaucrats can be exposed so long as the opposition movement raises the central demands of the workers:

"Demands for better provisions, higher wages, more holidays, higher pensions, shorter working week, better health services, radical environmental protection measures and above all unions and workers' councils independent of the state."

This is crass economism, understood in the sense used by Lenin. It is the belief that the economic struggle, of itself, generates the struggle for power.

The theory of state capitalism has not simply made the comrades of the SWP and SAG short-sighted, unable to see clearly the main features of development in the GDR; it has made them completely blind to reactionary developments that are occurring.

Evidence

The Stalinists of the GDR, like those of Poland and Hungary, have already changed elements of the property laws to allow foreign capital to select the most promising sections of the economy for purchase. Nonetheless, flying in the face of all the evidence, the SAG tell us:

"The state capitalist bureaucracy know that in today's world only the biggest and most modern plants can survive. The concentration of the means of production in the single hand of the state is a material precondition for the survival of the relatively backward state capitalisms of East Europe. The tendency is not away from state capitalism but, rather, towards it, because an economic necessity underlies it."

State capitalism as an analysis of the Soviet Union has always appeared more "radical" than Trotsky's formula, "degenerated workers' state" because it seems to condemn the Stalinist regime more completely. It is, however, a cosmetic radicalism, at best an impressionist revulsion at the crimes of Stalinism and at worst a means of avoiding the attacks of the bourgeoisie and their agents in the labour movement.

In the present crisis of the Stalinist regimes not only does state capitalism prevent revolutionaries from understanding what is happening before their eyes, it also leads them to conclude, logically, that not very much is at stake anyway. Exchanging one capitalist system for another is not an important question.

On this underestimation of the defeat that the restoration of capitalism in the GDR would mean we can confidently predict that, should the majority of the people make clear that they do want reunification, even on a capitalist basis, the SWP will not retain its present position of opposing this. It will, more probably, shrug its shoulders, propose abstention and explain that socialism would be much better. So much for an organisation that seeks to win leadership of the working class. ■

RCP

"Exciting but not revolutionary"

BY MARK ABRAM

NO REVOLUTIONS have taken place in Eastern Europe according to the Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP). The left and the right, they tell us, are hopelessly muddled in describing 1989 as a year of revolution.

How then should the upheavals in the Stalinist states be understood? The RCP explains in its paper *The Next Step* (TNS):

"The events of the past year have certainly been exciting, but it is a gross exaggeration to say that they have been revolutionary." (26.1.90)

Even in Romania "the change that has taken place resembles a palace coup or a purge not a social revolution." (TNS 12.1.90) The faces may have changed, but the system is the same, argues the RCP.

What is any sane socialist to make of this? In place of an analysis of the events the RCP gives us its emotional response to them. They were "exciting" events. The Romanian masses will no doubt be delighted that their gun battles with the Securitate "excited" a small group of British leftists!

Frankly, we couldn't care less about the RCP's feelings. We are more interested in understanding the nature and dynamics of the East European events from a Marxist standpoint. Leon Trotsky said that a "revolution is an excess of history". Contradictions stored up for

years, and the accumulated antagonisms that have simmered for decades, suddenly explode. The masses storm onto the political stage.

There can be no doubt that 1989 was the year when the history of Stalinism's excesses finally caught up with it. On the one side the ruling bureaucratic castes of Eastern Europe could no longer sustain themselves in the old way. On the other the working class in these countries, sensing their opportunity, decided they were no longer prepared to live in the old way. Lenin defined such circumstances as a revolutionary situation.

In Eastern Europe the political revolution began as the masses took to the streets. Dictators fell or were pushed and major political changes occurred. But the RCP will have none of this—beyond allowing themselves a little excitement. Their mistake flows from the abandonment of revolutionary Marxism. Instead of taking the real world as their point of departure, they set up an idealised version of "the revolution" measured against which most actual revolutions are found wanting. They are only prepared to rubber stamp victorious social revolutions such as those in France in 1789 or Russia in October 1917.

Under capitalism and in the post-capitalist degenerate workers' states of Eastern Europe, there have been numerous political revolutions. These have not destroyed the existing social relations or set up the

Workers power

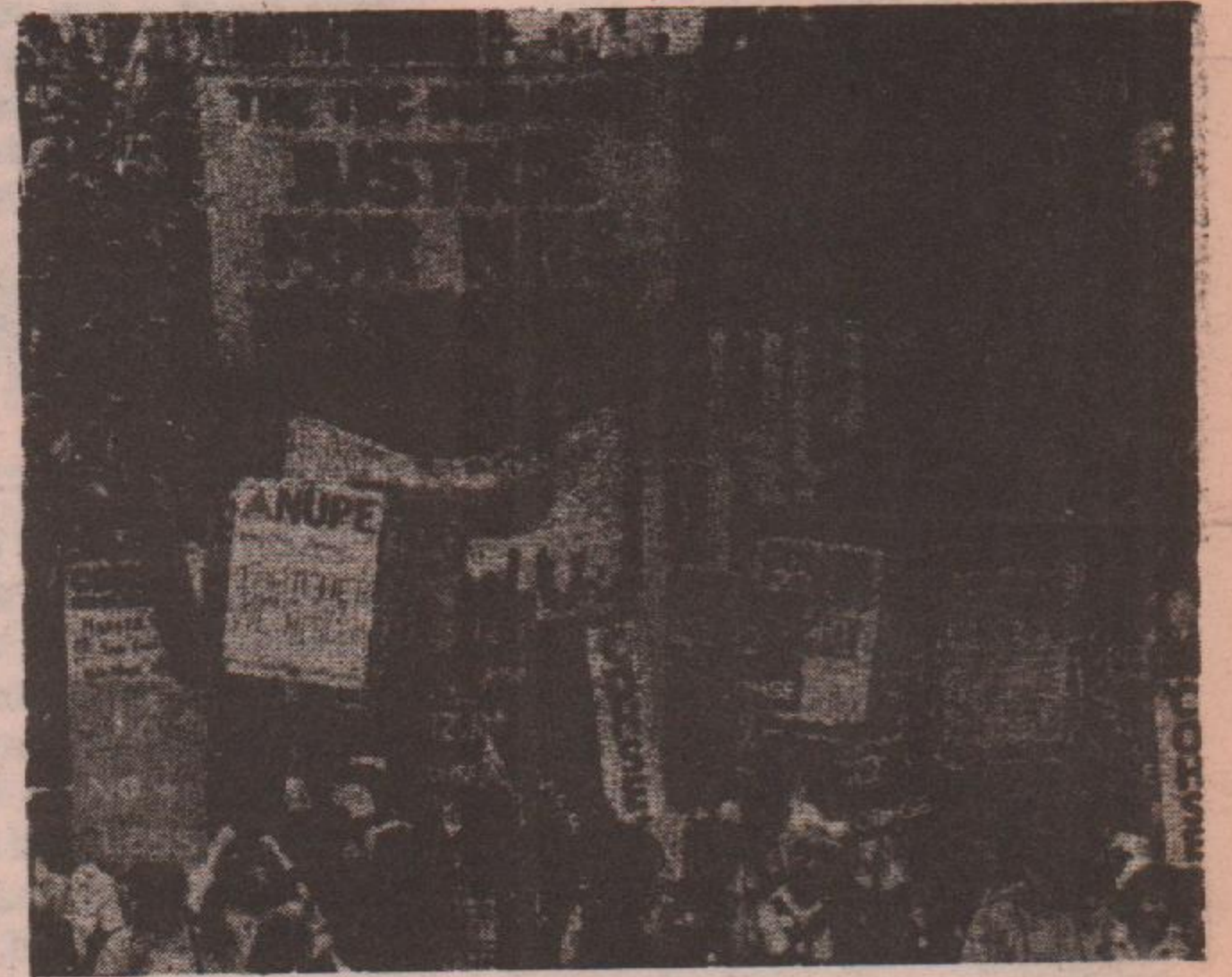
INSIDE

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British section of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International

Tories want wage cuts

WE WON'T PAY FOR THEIR CRISIS



ALMOST A quarter of all this year's pay claims in industry were lodged last month. Most of them for rises around or above 10%. Other claims in the pipeline are in double figures. The bosses are worried.

As usual they will try to blame the working class for the inbuilt problems of their capitalist system. Our wage rises will be cited as the cause of the increase in inflation.

Thatcher, Chancellor John Major and the governor of the Bank of England have all made speeches claiming that high wage settlements are beginning to price workers out of jobs. We are supposed to be the cause of unemployment, which has now stopped falling. British industry's lack of competitiveness on the world market, is, they all claim, caused by "excessive" wage settlements.

Every one of these claims is a lie. The push for double figure pay rises is a direct result of the inflation that has eaten into wage packets for over a year now.

Mortgages cost a small fortune, food prices edge up every month and huge Poll Tax bills will be arriving in a couple of months in England and Wales. Add to all this the effect of prices rises that resulted from firms pushing profit margins up when demand was high and you do not have to look any further to find the source of inflation.

So every worker knows they need a big rise just to keep up with the cost of living. But the bosses cannot afford to grant it since they know a new recession is on the horizon. They aim to make us pay for it, as they did through wage cuts and mass unemployment in the early 1980s.

In the state sector they are hoping to set pay norms below the level of inflation. This is why the ambulance dispute is so important for them. If they can beat the ambulance workers and push through the 6.5% offer they will have foisted an unofficial incomes policy upon the public sector. The ambulance workers are popular. Their claim is well supported. Beat them and we can beat the

rest is the logic of their current tough stance.

Tory pay policy also aims to boost productivity in the state sector by abolishing national pay bargaining. Local deals will mean workers divided from their fellow workers in other regions. The danger of national strikes will be reduced.

The Tories hope that their stand in the public sector will encourage private industry

to follow suit. At the moment they recognise that higher pay awards are necessary to help industry deal with skills shortages and avoid strikes at a time of high demand. The recession will change all that. A new offensive on pay will be needed in industry.

In the meantime government and the bosses are openly urging pay rises in industry to be tied to boosts in productivity. In nine cases out of ten, improvements in pay are being accompanied by agreements on new working conditions that are designed to make fewer work-

ers produce more goods. They are taking back with one hand much more than they are giving with the other.

Workers need their own pay policy to combat these attacks. It is no good going along with the trade union leaders' vague calls for "substantial" increases, their slow-coach negotiations and endless balloting and their tactics of either selective strikes or, as in the case of the ambulance workers, no strikes.

Economic recession this year will mean the bosses will become less and less

ready to budge in the face of such half-hearted pressures. We need clear demands backed up with decisive action.

Claims need to be formulated by the workers themselves. Mass meetings must discuss what is needed. A national conference of workplace representatives must determine a national claim, not as a bargaining counter, but as something to be fought for and won.

All deals must include a clause guaranteeing a 1% rise in wages for every 1% increase in the cost of living. And that cost of living index must be determined by committees of workers and their families. We do not want our needs measured against an official cost of living index that fiddles the figures by including all sorts of luxury goods that we are never likely to buy, while excluding rises in mortgages, rents and the Poll Tax.

We must reject all attempts to make us pay for wage rises by imposing productivity deals. We must defend national bargaining structures against the bosses' attempts to divide us and draw us into profit sharing schemes.

Strikes, run by democratically elected strike committees, pledged to a fight for victory and not to "winning" arbitration—the bargaining away of what we need for what the bureaucrats believe they can get—are the surest way of stopping the bosses making us pay for their problems.

Thatcher described the current round of claims as "very disturbing". Let's disturb her some more. ■

Nelson Mandela free!

"FREE NELSON Mandela" was probably the most popular political slogan of the 1980s. He is a symbol for millions across the world who oppose apartheid. Many have died in support of him and the struggle in South Africa, non-stop pickets of embassies have been sustained to realise it, millions have bought T-shirts and records in the west proclaiming it. Now we are about to get our wish.

Mandela is certain to leave his prison bungalow some time this month and take his place in the leadership of the ANC. The final manoeuvring between de Klerk and the ANC concerns what other measures of political reform will precede, accompany or follow Mandela's release.

The ANC are holding out for the legalisation of their organisation, the release of all political prisoners and the ending of the state of emergency. Pretoria would prefer some relaxation of the latter, a drip feed release of political

detainees and the legalising of only the UDF for the moment.

Whatever the final shape of the agreement between Mandela and de Klerk over the timing and conditions of his release, most attention is now focused on the outcome of post-release negotiations.

Ahead of his own release the ANC have published the position paper submitted by Mandela to Botha last June. Its contents have by and large been endorsed by the exiled leadership in Lusaka.

Mandela reaffirms the essence of the Freedom Charter: no renunciation of the violence of the oppressed in order to get talks going; a determination that majority rule must be "fully applied". In a separate communique he insists that the banks, mines and monopoly industries must be nationalised.

Twenty seven years in jail have not sapped Mandela's commitment to fight apartheid. He refuses to renounce

his earlier views. But the problem lies not in betraying his principles, but in how he conducts the fight once outside the gates.

Mandela suggests that talks between the ANC and the government will have to consider not only the blacks' demand for "majority rule in a unitary state" but also "the insistence of whites on structural guarantees that majority rule will not mean the domination of the white minority by blacks".

If this is meant to imply that some compromise formula is possible then the black masses should be alarmed. No compromise that maintains any privileges, economic or political, for the white minority must be allowed.

In the negotiations that lie ahead the black workers in the unions and in the base organisations of the UDF and ANC must construct committees that supervise and hold to account the leaders who are locked away in talks with

the racists.

- Down with any federal and power-sharing solutions!
- For universal, direct and equal suffrage!
- Convene a revolutionary constituent assembly elected by all over 16 years of age!
- There must be no downgrading of present struggles in order to create the "right climate" for talks.
- For a renewal of the living wage campaign!
- Maintain the rent boycott!
- For a general strike against the Labour Relations Act!
- Build workers' militias to defend the communities against the army and hired thugs!

It would be a betrayal of decades of struggles if in releasing Mandela the black working class was to be imprisoned in a negotiated settlement that leaves fundamental aspects of apartheid capitalism intact. ■