

# Workers power

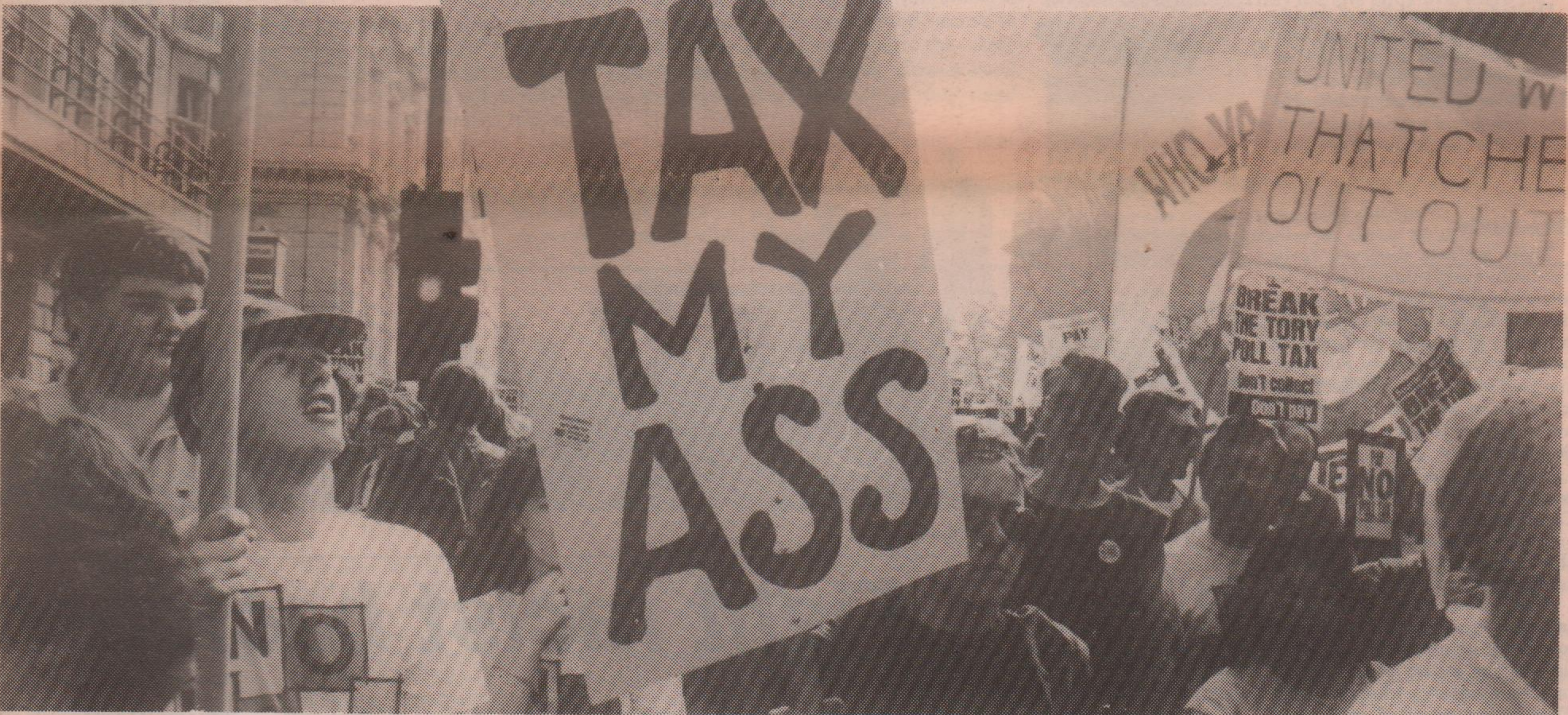
British section of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International

TROTSKY  
REHABILITATED?

See page 6

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# STRIKE AGAINST THE POLL TAX



Workers Power

**"THE POLL Tax has turned into both a political and bureaucratic nightmare which could easily destroy this government. The only answer is to scrap it and start all over again."**

These are not the words of anarchists or Trotskyists currently being hounded in the press. They are from the editorial of the *Mail on Sunday*, one of Margaret Thatcher's most loyal Tory rags. They signal both the depth of the Tory crisis and the danger that the Tories may yet find a way to survive it.

The 200,000 strong Demonstration on 31 March, called in the face of sabotage by Labour and the TUC, revealed only the tip of the iceberg of popular resent-

ment against the tax. By smashing into the demonstration with shields, vans and horses the police hoped to frighten millions of workers away from the growing protest movement.

By painting the violence as the work of extremists the media hoped to shift workers' anger away from Thatcher and direct it against the left.

Both ploys failed miserably as over 60% of those polled blamed the Tories for the violence and the clamour against the tax grew stronger.

Now the Cabinet is split down the middle on the tax. Some, like Chris Patten, want to modify the tax, reversing the Spending Assessments which led to the massive tax bills and sof-

tening its impact on the low paid. Others, like Chancellor John Major, want to charge cap every council, forcing local authorities to cut spending massively to reduce the bills.

Neither option shows an ounce of concern for the mass of ordinary families whose spending power has been slashed by the tax, or for the blatant injustice of charging a low paid worker the same as the richest man in Britain.

Both Patten and Major are motivated by the threat of a total landslide victory for Labour in the next election. Thatcher is frantically looking for a way out because she knows the results of the council elections will put her leadership in serious jeopardy.

The Tories' panic and disarray gives workers every reason to step up the anti-Poll Tax fight. Victory is in our sights.

But the depth of feeling against the tax means that a large section of the Tory Party could come round to the idea of ditching the tax, and even Thatcher herself, to defuse the political crisis.

If this happens—if the tax is "defeated" in the smoking rooms of the Pall Mall clubs instead of on the streets—what can workers look forward to?

A Poll Tax softened just enough to salvage the Tories' popularity in the shires, still eating away at the incomes and services of most working class people; another two years at least of blighted education for our

children, blighted services for the old and sick.

We will be left with a Tory leadership, whether under Heseltine or Kenneth Baker, still committed to preserving the gains made by the bosses during ten years of the Thatcher government. And in 1992, we'll get a Labour government committed to doing much the same.

This is why it is vital to seize the chance to smash the Poll Tax now, through workers' action. Mass non-payment, non-implementation and mass general strike action is what the bosses, their ministers and their newspaper editors fear the most.

Not only can it beat the Poll Tax; it can act as the focus for workers' wage

demands and for the politicisation of a generation of youth. Lost amid the welter of opinion poll statistics is the fact that only one in three of 18-24 year olds intend to pay the Poll Tax on time.

That is why in their panic it is still possible that the Tories will bring forward draconian powers to slash council spending, clamp down on non-payers and step up the police and media witch-hunt of the left.

The Tories are on the run. If every worker, every housewife, pensioner and student joins the Poll Tax fight not only can we chase Thatcher out of power.

We can make sure the working class is a force to be reckoned with by whoever takes her place. ■

WHERE NEXT? - TURN TO PAGE 4



# Prisons and poverty

**A**FTER ALMOST a month's siege the last of the Strangeways prison protesters were recaptured. Their action threw a spotlight onto Britain's antiquated and degrading prison system.

Reading the papers after the Strangeways action began you might have thought that a new wave of barbarian hordes had invaded the country.

The *Daily Mirror* informed its readers that 11 prisoners had been mutilated and killed by the protesters. Sex offenders had been brutally castrated. The past lives of the prisoners were raked up to prove that they were monsters.

Now that the trouble has died down the Home Office has admitted that all the Strangeways prisoners have been accounted for. The central purpose of the press scare stories was exposed—to deflect people's attention from the legitimate grievances of the prisoners against the inhuman conditions that prevail in jails across the country.

In Strangeways 1,660 men were held in a building built for 970. They were locked up, three to a cell—seven foot wide—for 23 hours a day. They were allowed a single shower and change of clothes a week, and are given a bucket to serve as a toilet.

This 122 year old prison is infested with rats and cockroaches. When three of the protesters were taken ill, it was revealed that their food may have been contaminated with rat poison.

Denied any possibility of voicing their anger in any other way, and full of bitterness at the daily repression they face at the hands of the screws, the Strangeways prisoner rioted and barricaded themselves into the prison wings they had secured.

## Obscenity

Their protests deserved to be heeded by every humanitarian, let alone socialist. Their conditions of incarceration are an obscenity, a reminder of how far we are from being a civilised society. For what civilised society would entertain a situation in which human beings are subjected to such abominable degradation.

Of course the Tories will have none of this. Home Office Minister David Mellor thundered:

"I take issue with the idea that this violence was in any way a comment on our prison system."

Well, we are used to the Tories taking issue with reality. But an argument hammered home every day by the gutter press, is that prisoners deserve what they get. They have committed crimes and have to pay their debt to society.

Many workers are fooled by this argument because the reality of "crime" in capitalist society is carefully concealed from them. If we look at the real statistics of the prison population then crime, and punishment, appears in a very different light.

Of the 38,548 prisoners convicted in 1988, 46% were sent down for crimes against property. Another 24% were inside for crimes connected with dole fraud and fine default. In 1986, 19,159 fine defaulters were imprisoned.

It is overwhelmingly poor people who get sent to prison. And in the 1980s Thatcher has systematically swelled the ranks of the poor. Mass unemployment has driven many people to despair, and to crime.

By imprisoning people who cannot afford to pay their fines or their debts the Tories are criminalising poverty. By slashing welfare benefits, house building programmes and other social provisions the Tories drive people into petty crime.

Desperate to avoid poverty some people are drawn into committing anti-social acts such as burglary of working class homes, street robberies and so on. Last, but not least, the Tories criminalise activities that people engage in to escape from their misery, such as drug use, or financially relieve it such as prostitution and dole fraud.

Add to all of these the workers jailed for their heroic role in strikes like that of the miners, and we can see that most people in prison are not the hardened criminal "monsters" of the *Mirror* and the *Sun's* imagination, but victims of the misery that class society inflicts.

The big criminals—the so called underworld—are a minority of those inside. They are after all respectable businessmen, for that is the reality of organised crime in modern capitalist society. They are the drug barons, not the street dealers, the City swindlers, not the dole fiddlers.

Socialists are clear that petty crime involving anti-social acts cannot be tolerated, even though we understand its causes. But our answer to this problem is not to bang away thousands of poor

people, to tool up the police and unleash them on the communities.

It is to wage a relentless fight to eradicate the causes of such crimes, through massive programmes of public works, through the guarantee of work or full pay, through the building of working class militias

capable of dealing with anti-social elements in the communities and defending the communities against police, racist and fascist attacks.

And for those in prison we demand decent conditions. They must be given the right to organise and have legal and political rights, to

get the union rates for work they are obliged to carry out. There must be a massive improvement in prison conditions, in access to education and recreation. The ruthless regime of discipline at the hands of reactionary screws must be ended. ■

**OVERCROWDING** in the prisons was a major factor in the outbursts of unrest last month. But this situation is no accident; the prison population has soared under Tory rule.

When Leon Brittan, then Home Secretary, announced his new prison building programme to the 1983 Tory conference, he stated: "In our first term of office the fight against the evil of inflation was the government's fundamental task. I believe that in our second term the fight against crime is the key task of all."

Brittan was obliged to resign due to his less than above board behaviour during the Westland scandal, but there were enough rednecks in the Tory ranks to see to it that his law and order campaign was carried on.

The prison population of England and Wales currently stands at

## Tory jailers

46,567. There are twice as many remand prisoners now as there were in 1980. Between 1983 and 1987 average sentences grew from 10.9 to 15.1 months. The number of people given custodial sentences grew from 16% of all convicted men in 1976 to 21% in 1986.

The Tory response to this was not to tackle the social problems that gave rise to crime but to build more prisons. An ambitious prison building programme was launched in 1980 designed to expand prison capacity by 55%. When this programme is finished in 1995 Britain will have 24 prisons and the capacity for a further 10,000 additional inmates.

The Tories clearly banked on causing more crime, not less and were simply preparing to cope with it.

Britain has more people in jail than any other country in the European Community. There are 96 prisoners for every 100,000 people. Equivalent figures for West Germany and the Netherlands—countries with roughly comparable crime levels to Britain—are 84 and 40 respectively.

Only the semi-dictatorship in Turkey gets near Britain, with 95 prisoners per 100,000. Clearly Thatcher's Britain is one of the most repressive countries in Europe.

The Tories haven't dealt with crime. They've dealt with expanding the means of coping with those driven to crime by their policies of mass unemployment and social deprivation. ■



Day two of the Strangeways occupation

Paul Hermann/Profile

**R**ACISM is on the rise. Its official voice in Parliament targets Britain's black community as aliens because they "cheer for the wrong side". It stigmatises black children, allowing white parents to move their kids to white schools. Its cheerleaders in the media runs scare stories about "English children being taught in Punjabi".

And the result on the streets? Increased racist abuse, racist violence and a proliferation of fascist-inspired "rights for whites" campaigns. A recent survey said one third of young workers think there are "too many blacks in Britain".

The reason for this rise in racism is easy to find. Trailing by 24% at the opinion polls a section of the Tories thinks it can boost the party's popularity by playing the racist card.

So, despite the chaos it would cause for British imperialism's loyal supporters amongst Hong Kong Chinese, Norman Tebbit demanded that not one be allowed British citizenship in the run up to Hong Kong's integration with Stalinist China. He claimed British blacks would not pass the "cricket test": even second and third generation immigrants still cheer for India and Pakistan against England.

The Tory mainstream distanced itself from Tebbit. Even the *Telegraph* told him, "it's not cricket!". But in the

## Fight racist backlash

same week Education Secretary John MacGregor made the first racist ruling under the Education Act's provision for "parental choice". A white mother in Cleveland can change her daughter's school because she doesn't want her "learning Pakistani".

Coming after the racist campaign in Dewsbury, which led to white parents removing their children from a predominantly Asian school, the decision gives a green light to racists all over the country to step up their fight for apartheid education. It exposes the uselessness of the Race Relations Act and the Commission for Racial Equality, which were overruled by the Tories.

At present, however, the Tories are not ready for a full blown campaign of racist rhetoric, such as the "aliens swamp our culture" hysteria Thatcher whipped up before the 1979 election.

On the Hong Kong Chinese question they have put aside their bedrock commitment to "no more primary immigration" in order to save the capitalist social order in Hong Kong.

On the "cricket test" they have subordinated their deep seated racism to their policy of stratifying the black community and creating a Tory voting black middle class. They are well aware that Labour support amongst Asian voters fell from over 80% to 63% as a result of this policy in the 1987 election.

And on immigration they would have great difficulty in outflanking Labour in Parliament. The Labour front bench was to the right of Thatcher in the Hong Kong debate, scandalously siding with Tebbit and refusing to put forward any alternative to his immigration ban.

The Tories' refusal to sanction official racist hysteria has let off the leash the unofficial racist alliance which stretches from the Tory right, through the gutter press and the police, to hard line white racists and fascists.

The *Sun* has been lashing "loony left" Labour Councils in the run up to the council elections with charges of funding "black extremists and drug pushers" through the many Voluntary Sector projects which exist in black communities.

White racists and fascists colluded in a series of marches in East London after racist attacks in schools led to a white youth being stabbed. At the same time the fascist BNP has been using the elections to claim its statutory right to hold inflammatory meetings in black areas (report p4).

In the face of this backlash black and white workers and youth must wage an urgent struggle to combat every aspect of racism and fascism in Britain—fight for the right of all Hong Kong Chinese to come to Britain; abolish all immigration controls; fight educational apartheid and the racist allocation of council housing; build black self-defence squads against racist, fascist and police attacks; fight for labour movement support for and participation in such defence; drive the fascists off the streets and out of the meeting halls by organising to physically smash them.

Around these policies we can defeat the current racist onslaught and prepare to fight the mainstream Tories or a Labour government, when they decide the time is ripe to play the racist card themselves. ■



## EDITORIAL

## Abortion fight goes on

DEFENDERS OF women's abortion rights breathed a sigh of relief after the Commons voted out amendments seeking to lower the time limit for abortion to 22 weeks or less, and for a liberalising clause which allows later abortions in specified cases.

But whilst the reactionaries were decisively defeated on this, and their attempt to outlaw embryo research completely, the medical lobby were victorious in cutting the upper time limit from 28 to 24 weeks in all but exceptional cases.

This aspect was a defeat for women, representing as it does the acceptance that foetal viability determines the general limit on abortions. It concedes that in all situations except where there is threat of "a grave permanent injury to the physical and mental health of the pregnant woman", or a risk of serious mental or physical handicap to the foetus, the woman's right to choose what to do with her body is denied in law.

It means that because some fetuses survive when born prematurely at this gestation, after this point, they have "rights" which supersede those of the mother in whose womb they are carried. The woman has no choice after this date.

Taking foetal viability as the basis of abortion law is a dangerous infringement of the right of women to control their own bodies and lives. Any time limit concedes the principle that the state can lay down limits, and doctors can make decisions which override those of the woman. In particular it will be left to doctors, and ultimately to judges, to decide what constitutes a "grave and serious" injury to a woman's health.

The liberalising clause means that most of the late abortions that do take place could probably still be carried out (there were 23 abortions after 24 weeks in 1988). But it rules out late abortions for all other reasons. Women have not been given the right to control their own fertility.

We can be sure that the anti-abortionists will be back soon to try to amend away the liberalising clauses and will be back later with further time limit reductions. The 24 week limit also threatens

all abortions after 20 weeks if doctors decide to play safe because of the difficulties of assessing the age of the foetus. Such restrictions would hit many more young and menopausal women seeking abortions.

Before anyone celebrates this vote as a victory they should remember that abortion provision in many areas of Britain is amongst the worst in Europe. In the West Midlands the continuing stranglehold of certain consultants, and the refusal of the Health Authorities to tackle the question, means that it is virtually impossible to get an NHS abortion. In Dudley, only 1% of abortions are carried out on the NHS!

Women have to find the money, go out of the area, face an unwanted pregnancy or in some cases persist with the wait. The result, as Dr Wendy Savage has pointed out, is that the number of late abortions is actually higher in the West Midlands than in her own area where provision is relatively open. The sheer human misery represented by these statistics is enormous.

Another reason for caution about the recent vote is the Embryo Bill itself, of which the abortion amendments form only a tiny part. While the Commons vote allowing embryo research was another blow to the reactionary bigots, the Bill as a whole still poses a threat to women's right to choose. In particular, the restrictions on artificial insemination by donor, and on the clinics that provide it, are a severe attack on lesbian mothers and indeed on all single women who want to have children.

Abortion and fertility rights are working class issues that must be fought for by the whole class. It is working class women who are denied access to abortion and fertility treatment when the state imposes restrictions—the rich have always been able to pay for these provisions when they need them.

But these rights are essential for women if they are to be able to plan and control their whole lives, to choose whether or not to have children, to avoid the misery of enforced pregnancy in conditions of poverty, or when the right to work or education

would be affected.

The right to abortion is essential to ensure that women can play a full part in social and political life. Women's right to have children inside or outside a "normal" family unit undermines the ruling class' reliance on the family to maintain social control and continue the super-exploitation of women. In other words, the fight for abortion and fertility rights is a central part of the fight against women's oppression in capitalist society.

What are the tasks facing us in the wake of the Commons' decision? The campaign to defeat the Embryo Bill must continue and must be taken into the trade unions and workplaces, so that these arguments are debated within the working class and particularly by working class women.

The campaign for abortion rights must also seize the opportunity to go onto the offensive for increased provision. Year after year we have been forced onto the defensive by the reactionaries. Now we must turn the tables with the slogan, "As early as possible, as late as necessary".

We must campaign to force Health Authorities to reverse moves to cut contraceptive and abortion provision and instead increase it. This will be vital with the changes in funding due to go through in the next year.

The Labour Party should be committed to making such provision statutory. The trade unions and the TUC who have abortion on request as policy must be made to take up the campaign for provision and to extend abortion rights.

Both the Stop the Amendment Campaign (STAC) and the National Abortion Campaign have been concentrating their attention on persuading MPs and various worthies to oppose restrictions. But the real force that needs to be mobilised is working class women themselves. They are the ones who have the greatest interest in fighting—and the power to mobilise the rest of the working class. We should step up the fight to turn the women's movement slogan into reality: "Free abortion on demand: a woman's right to choose!" ■

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## SOVIET MINERS A lesson for the left

WORKERS POWER recently talked to Viktor Yakovlev who is a miners' leader from Vorkuta in the USSR. He was in Britain as a result of an invitation from Terry Fields MP, a *Militant* supporter.

Viktor himself is a member of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and supporter of the Democratic Platform within it. He is a deputy to the Supreme Soviet elected in a straight fight against the Minister of Coal as a miners' candidate. He edits the organ of the Vorkuta workers' committee—*Vestnik Rabochnego Dvizhenie*. He opposes the reactionary anti-Semitic Pamyat organisation, telling us that if anyone raised the call in Vorkuta to kick out the Jews "we would beat them up".

During his visit Viktor cancelled arrangements to speak on a number of *Militant* platforms. Convinced that their campaign was only a front for themselves, and one that allowed him insufficient access to the British workers' movement, Viktor looked for support elsewhere.

The new friends that Viktor found were on the right wing of the labour movement and in the reactionary NTS (Popular Labour Alliance) of the Russian emigration. He was taken to meet scab union leader Roy Lynk. He was taken to see Conservative trade unionists.

He also met Kim Howells, and NUM officials in Yorkshire. On two other occasions he met representatives of the Campaign for Solidarity with Workers in the Eastern Bloc (CSWEB)—a left wing solidarity organisation which Workers Power supports.

Let this be a lesson to the left. We have major political differences with Viktor which we have openly discussed with him. In turn Viktor, and millions of Soviet workers like him, want to hear all of the ideas within the British labour movement, right and left. Who could be surprised after years of Stalinist oppression?

The capitalist class internationally has at its disposal the funds to support the creation of pro-capitalist unions in the USSR. They have the agents to carry it out in the form of the western labour bureaucracy and shady right wing organisations such as the NTS. They are set on winning workers like Viktor to the project of building pro-boss unions like the AFL-CIO of the US.

A major ideological struggle lies ahead. We must not allow the reborn Soviet workers' movement to be shaped by the western right. We must intervene actively to prevent that happening. And this means saying no to front campaigns by individual groups. It

## IN brief

means a united front to ensure that Soviet workers have democratic access to the British workers' movement. It means them hearing the alternative to the right wing through meeting real rank and file workers.

We print below Viktor's appeal to the British labour movement. Representatives of the miners of the USSR will be here again in June. At present their major contacts are on the right wing. Let us ensure that they speak to rank and file workers and do not spend their time, as Viktor Yakovlev so often did, either parading on the platforms of individual groups or taking beer and sandwiches with anti-communist functionaries.

We must use this appeal to make sure that this does not happen again. ■

### Hear the voice of the Soviet miners

In the aftermath of the Soviet miners' strikes of 1989 rank and file activists have been campaigning to create a new independent Soviet miners' union.

In May a conference of delegates from the Donbass, Vorkuta, the Kuzbass and Karaganda is being held to discuss the foundation of such a union. In June a party of rank and file Soviet miners will visit Britain to explain their case and call for solidarity and material support to assist in the difficult work of creating an independent trade union in the USSR.

The Soviet miners want to speak to as wide an audience as possible in the British labour movement. They call on you to support them by sponsoring a democratic committee to co-ordinate the tour nationally and democratic committees in the localities to organise meetings, finance and accommodation.

We urge you to give this campaign your full support so that, after 30 many years, the authentic voice of Soviet workers can be heard.

Viktor Borisovich Yakovlev  
Vorkuta miner, People's Deputy of the USSR

## WINCHESTER THREE

WORKERS POWER hails the release of the Winchester Three. Finbar Cullen, Martina Shanahan and John McAnn were all victims of the British state's merciless campaign against Irish people who oppose its murderous occupation of the Six Counties.

The decision to quash the 25 year jail sentences given to the three for their supposed conspiracy to murder the then Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Tom King, was a total frame up.

Because two of the defendants exercised their legitimate right to silence Tom King went onto the TV, in the midst of their trial, and announced that the right was to be abolished. The hateful ruling class judge Lord Denning declared:

"It's only the guilty person who says 'Oh, I claim my right to silence.'"

Exercising your rights automatically means you are guilty! So much for Denning and King's view of democracy.

The fact that these statements were broadcast on TV led the Court of Appeal to quash the guilty verdicts.

But we need to temper our celebrations at the release with a reminder that the three have, in effect, been released on the basis of a technicality not open to many others held by the British state. We must press home the case for the release of all the political prisoners, including the Birmingham Six. They are rotting in jail so that Britain can maintain its unjust rule in the Six Counties and keep Ireland divided and unfree. ■

Provo ceasefire? Turn to page 12

### East London Year of Action

#### An Evening for the Birmingham Six

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**N**OW THAT the bills are being issued, the campaign against the Poll Tax is growing. Anti-Poll Tax unions (APTUs) report bigger public meetings. Regular activists meetings which have battled on, sometimes very small and isolated, are now attracting more and more local support.

Tory attempts to put people off in the aftermath of the Trafalgar Square violence have backfired. Many city and town based Federations are organising public burnings of the Poll Tax bills and pickets of post offices to convince people not to pay.

At present it is impossible to judge the number of non-payers accurately. In some of the charge-capped authorities the bills will not go out for weeks.

But the immediate task in the local APTUs is to counter the fears many workers have about non-payment. To do this it is vital to organise regular information meetings, street meetings and regular door-to-door canvassing for new members of the APTU.

The leadership of the All Britain Federation is concentrating on propaganda emphasising the difficulties the councils will have enforcing the law against non-payment. But it is no use reassur-

## POLL TAX

# Where next?

ing non-payers that "only" luxury goods will be taken by the bailiffs, that attachment of earnings orders will be hard to operate, or that they can "only" jail you for three months. The way to strengthen non-payers' confidence is to fight for a strategy which will clearly stop the tax.

On the estates that means arguing and preparing for mass mobilisations to confront the bailiffs and the Poll Tax snoopers. It means organising workers' defence squads to repulse police-protected bailiffs who come to seize workers' property.

But it is now vital that activists focus their attention on building APTUs in the workplaces. Attachment of earnings orders will be one of the most effective weapons in the Tories' hands. They can only be fought by organisation at work.

In many traditionally militant

workplaces APTUs are being set up. These should fight for strike action against any attempt to deduct the Poll Tax at source. In London, hospital workers have launched their own campaign against the tax. An occupation of the offices at Charing Cross Hospital has forced the health authority to back down after threatening to deduct the tax from workers' wages.

In Manchester, housing department staff aim to boycott Poll Tax work in a battle over conditions. They have threatened strike action if anyone is victimised. But workers' action needs to go beyond fights with individual employers. If non-payers are jailed or trade

unionists fined for organising action against the tax it will take more than individual workplaces on strike to get them off.

The strategy of the anti-Poll Tax fight must centre on mobilising mass, generalised strike action against the tax itself. The desire to get rid of the Poll Tax, and the Tories with it, is massive. The danger is it will find expression only in individual pay battles, fights against council cuts etc. We need to focus workers' anger on the goal of general strike action.

The moment a single non-payer is jailed, the moment workers' action against the tax is threatened with prosecution the call should go out for solidarity strike

action. The trade union bureaucrats must have their annual seaside Conferences overwhelmed with calls for strike action against the tax. The TUC should be forced to name the day for a one day general strike in protest at the tax. Our aim should be a general strike to smash the tax.

Alongside this strategy goes the fight to transform the city and town based federations into delegate councils of action, linking area APTUs with workplace APTUs and trade unions in a genuinely representative structure which can organise the fight.

The Trafalgar Square demo was both a massive show of strength and an example of the political weakness of the National Anti-Poll Tax Federation. The Federation's officers ran to the media, blaming "anarchist jobs" for the violence, not the police (see p14).

It is vital that another national delegate conference is called to hold the leaders of the Federation to account and replace them with those who have the backbone for the tactics necessary to win. ■

## New pay revolt?

THE TORIES' nightmares of ever soaring inflation fuelling a new spring and summer of discontent might soon come true. Already, manual workers in the electricity industry have voted to reject the bosses' paltry offer of 8.5% in favour of strike action by a majority of nearly 11,000.

In the 1989 pay round power workers gained a 9.2% rise with the mere threat of an overtime ban. Now, however, members of the industry's four unions face the end of national bargaining in the wake of privatisation and the break up of the industry into 20 separate companies, including 12 regional boards.

Despite the big vote for a strike the union bureaucrats have yet to call any action and the signs are that they will pursue the classic new realist tactic of selective, limited action. Instead of striking while the members' anger is still red hot, the negotiators from the EETPU, TGWU, GMB and AEU have all agreed to another meeting with the bosses' side in the hope of an offer of "at least 10%". Given the Tories' need to keep the lid on public sector pay, the industry management will be reluctant to make any concessions, especially with the prospect of intense competitive pressures by the end of the year.

**The power workers are far from alone in their dissatisfaction. The threat of action on British Rail and the London Underground still looms, while workers at British Nuclear Fuels Ltd have also thrown out a proposed final offer of 8.4%. In the NHS, administration and clerical workers are to meet on 18 May in a special delegate conference to discuss limited strike action in response to management's 7.7% offer.**

Meanwhile, in the private sector, more than 1,000 workers at Iveco-Ford in Slough have struck. 86% of

the workforce voted to reject a two year, 9.5% deal and walked out.

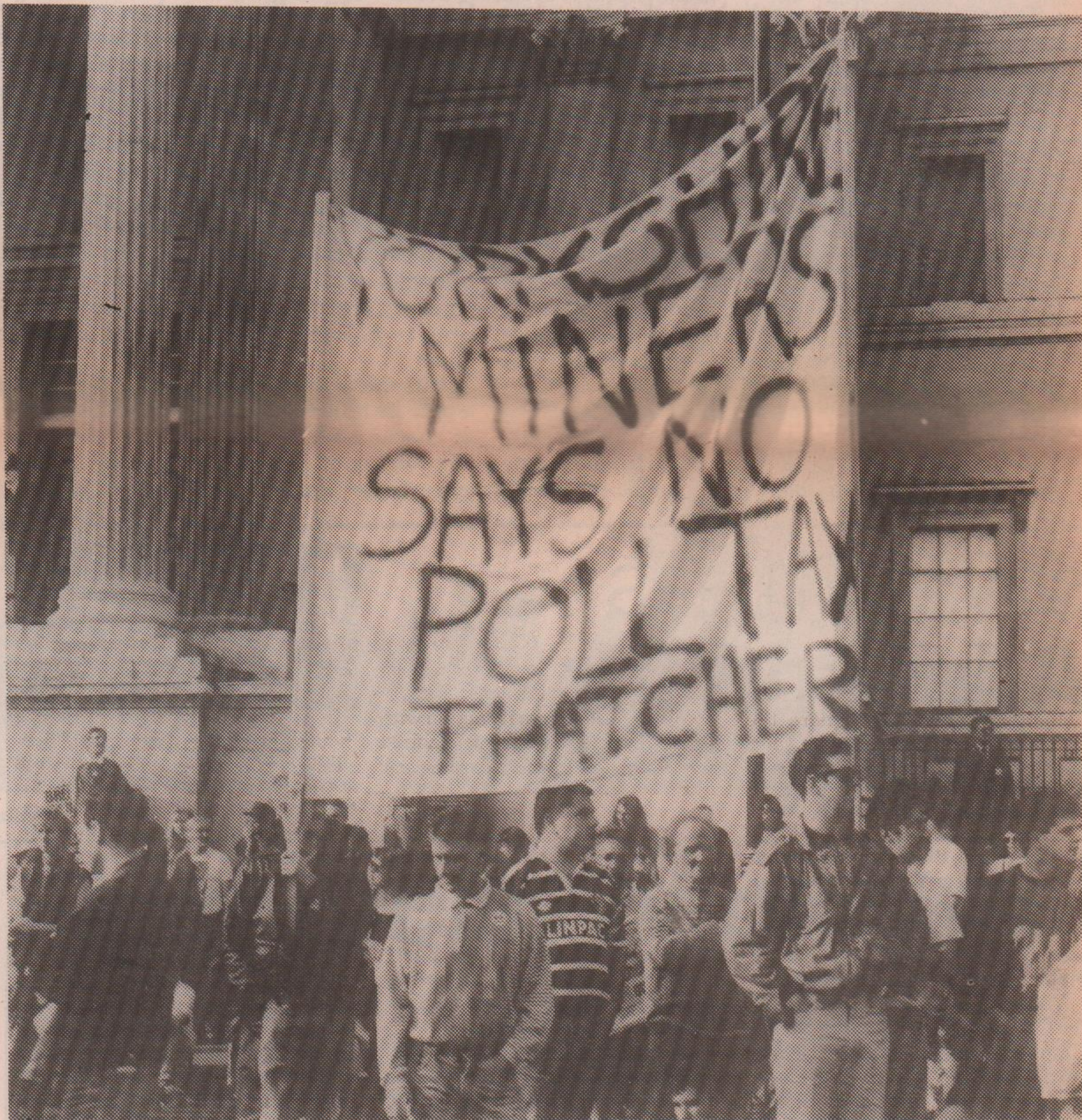
**In spite of an attempt by such North Sea oil giants as Shell and BP to buy off anger at their criminal contempt for workers' safety with an offer of 11.7%, the threat of renewed action on the rigs persists. Thousands of offshore workers are increasingly prepared to fight for union recognition and the enforcement of health and safety regulations on the rigs and platforms.**

Unfortunately, virtually all these sections of workers share another problem with their brothers and sisters in the electricity industry: union leaderships who are reluctant to mount any kind of fight and are absolutely determined to remain bound by the shackles of the Tories' anti-union laws. The danger of being sold out or sold short is all too real in each of these disputes.

In the power industry and elsewhere, rank and file militants should be organising for indefinite strike action to win their full claims. They should argue that in future ordinary workers meet and decide pay demands, not union tops whose bloated salaries cushion them against inflation's ravages.

Power workers should also seize the opportunity offered by a pay dispute to fight off the profiteering vultures about to swoop down on the industry. In the event of a strike, electricity workers should form strike committees, elected by, and accountable to, mass meetings. Alongside a real pay rise with no productivity strings, a nationalised power industry controlled by its workforce should be foremost among their demands.

The alternative will be divisive regional pay deals and attacks on conditions as the private companies squeeze still more out of working class electricity users through price increases. ■



Take the fight into the workplace

Workers Power

## Defend Andy Murphy!

**I**N THE aftermath of the battle of Trafalgar Square and the ensuing riot in London's West End, the bosses' media busily set about finding scapegoats. Class War activist Andy Murphy spoke to the media about his organisation's attitude to the violence. He called those who fought the police "working class heroes".

Two days later an outraged Tory backbencher revealed at Prime Minister's question time that Murphy worked for Hackney Council and called for him to be sacked. Thatcher agreed. So did Kinnock who apparently telephoned the council's Labour leaders demanding action.

The following day "loony left" Hackney Council suspended him from work in its housing depart-

ment while it investigated "whether or not he had brought the council into disrepute by being a supporter of Class War".

On 6 April workers in the Housing and Finance department walked out and the NALGO branch called for a further one day strike on 2 May.

All council workers should support Andy Murphy in his struggle for reinstatement.

No criminal proceedings have been taken out against him. The council officer who launched the enquiry had not even seen a tape of the interview at the time. He based the suspension on nothing but hearsay.

Andy Murphy is being witch-hunted simply for expressing a controversial political view in public. Murphy is not the only local coun-

cil worker attacked in this fashion. Two anti-Poll Tax activists in Birmingham came under attack by local councillors for the "crime" of being on the protest lobby when the tax was set!

This all comes at a time when 75,000 local government employees in "sensitive" areas have lost their rights to be involved in public political activity "in a way designed to affect support for a political party".

The hounding of socialist and anarchist activists threatens all local government workers who dare to challenge the implementation of the Poll Tax and of deep cuts in services. Don't let them get away with it.

● Reinststate Andy Murphy!  
● No witch-hunts!





**D**ELEGATES AT the National Union of Teachers' Conference voted by a 32,000 majority for national strike action against threatened redundancies. Their union executive immediately pledged not to implement the resolution.

Teachers face job losses due to cuts, Poll Tax capping and the government's Local Management of Schools (LMS) scheme. Bradford teachers are facing a possible 240 job losses. Education chiefs in Hammersmith and Fulham estimate the £99 per head tax-cap could lead to 300 redundancies.

The LMS scheme makes every school responsible for its own budget and sets budgets according to average costs, not actual costs. Since the majority of a school's budget is taken up with salaries, LMS will lead to better paid, more experienced teachers being sacked to make way for newly qualified, poorly paid replacements.

Added to the below-inflation pay award imposed this year, and the strains of working in an understaffed, underfunded service, it is no wonder that teachers' anger exploded onto the floor of conference.

But despite being able to win a majority for militant action over jobs, rank and file teachers are faced with a union bureaucracy which can effectively ignore the conference votes. Not only that, the Executive was able to fend off

## NUT CONFERENCE

# Fight on jobs and pay!

calls for immediate action over teachers' salaries by allowing a special conference in October.

Less than a week after they got teachers' delegates to swallow this the NUT leaders were faced with a proposal from Education Minister John MacGregor to restore pay negotiating rights... with ministers reserving the right to veto any settlement!

Doug MacAvoy and the NUT leadership made an undisguised attempt to go over the heads of NUT activists to the rank and file. Three years of union powerlessness over pay have left many local organisation meetings poorly attended and school groups badly organised.

The task for NUT activists now is to translate the anger and frustration in schools into action. In the first place solidarity action with those teachers striking against redundancies. In addition the rank

and file must organise for action over pay.

By October MacAvoy and Co could be well on the way to agreeing a new pay machinery behind the backs of ordinary NUT members which will leave the union just as powerless as at present.

The NUT leaders must be stopped from wasting time—time paid for by the members' union dues—in rival posturing against their bureaucratic opposite numbers in the NAS/UWT. NUT members must join colleagues in the NAS/UWT who voted unanimously for national action over pay and redundancies.

Within the NUT the next step for all activists is to turn the 30 June Conference called by the Socialist Teachers' Alliance/Campaign for a Fighting Democratic Union into a forum to organise action: with the Executive if possible, against them if necessary. ■

## ANTI-FASCIST ACTION

# BNP rally hit

**L**OOKING TO repeat the success of the fascist parties in last year's EEC elections, the British National Party (BNP) stood four candidates in Tower Hamlets council elections.

Basing their campaign on the slogan "Rights for Whites" they had already capitalised on the white backlash after Bengali and Somali youth fought off racist attackers at a local school. The fascists have been leafleting and putting up stickers demanding "Stop immigration, start repatriation" all over the Bethnal Green area.

This area, close to the Asian community of Brick Lane, has always been a recruiting ground for fascists because of its appalling housing and high unemployment. Added to this the SLD controlled council in Tower Hamlets is notoriously racist. It recently tried to re-house Asian families onto barges moored in the Thames Estuary!

The BNP called an election rally at

the Osmani school right in the middle of the Asian community. After protests it was moved to Weavers' Fields School.

To combat the fascists' attempt to get a public platform, East London Anti-Fascist Action called a counter-mobilisation to the BNP meeting on 21 April. Workers Power supports Anti-Fascist Action (AFA) which is committed to implementing the principle of "No platform for fascists" i.e. where possible physically preventing fascist meetings, demonstrations and paper sales.

One hundred and fifty fascists turned up to hear racist rants from the BNP leaders. The Labour Party, Socialist Workers Party (SWP) and various community leaders called a protest rally outside the school but made no attempt to organise the breakup of the fascist meeting.

AFA meanwhile successfully infiltrated a large body of BNP supporters being marched to the meeting under police protection and was

then able to inflict serious damage on the fascists before they scurried into their meeting protected by the police. At the same time we agitated within the "protest" for the tactics needed to overcome the heavy police presence.

The task of stopping fascist meetings is not new for workers in London's East End. Nor will it go away. But it is confronted each time with so-called revolutionaries like the SWP who refuse to act on their much talked-about commitment to "no platform".

Ten anti-fascists were arrested. AFA is appealing for witnesses and for donations towards defence costs. We urge readers to contribute to this fund and join AFA's fight to drive the fascists off every public platform they try to gain. ■

For information or to make contributions write to:  
AFA, c/o BM 1734,  
London WC1N 3XX

# Oskar Hippe

1900-1990

THE DEATH of Oskar Hippe on the 13 March has taken from the international working class one of its truest sons and last links with the generation of class fighters who were first moulded in the Second International.

Oskar's first lessons in politics came from his elder brother and sister who argued against his father's monarchism and protected their mother from his overbearing, and sometimes violent, behaviour. They not only introduced young Oskar to Marxist ideas but also to working class organisation.

On 28 July 1914, he took part in his first demonstration—against the threat of war. The sense of solidarity, the obvious need for the international working class to stand together, and the confidence that they would, inspired the fourteen year old who had just left school.

Just one week later, as the young men marched off to war, the new apprentice was thrown into complete confusion when the same orators urged more to follow them. Some two years later, after he had moved to Berlin, the confusion was resolved when Oskar took part in another anti-war demo—this time an illegal one on 1 May—at which Karl Liebknecht spoke and was arrested.

These formative experiences left an indelible mark on Oskar. From then on he dedicated his life to working class organisation based on the fundamental principles of Marxism. This, of course, was true for many of his generation. What marked Oskar off from most others was a sheer strength of character which enabled him to stick to his principles when many others found reasons to dilute, distort and even betray them.

After the arrest of Liebknecht, Oskar joined the Spartacusbund and began a political career that encompassed virtually every key moment in the history of the German working class movement. He was imprisoned by the state, shot by the Nazis, blacklisted by the employers and betrayed by the Stalinists. Throughout it all though, Oskar remained a living proof of Trotsky's observation that the only real protection against repression is the trust of one's fellow workers.

It was this which ensured he would become a Trotskyist. Oskar opposed the ultra-left positions imposed on the German Communists by Moscow and joined the Leninbund led by Hugo Urbahns. When Urbahns rejected the characterisation of the Soviet Union as a workers' state, he broke with the Leninbund and sided with the International Left Opposition.

In the Oranienburg district of Berlin, he and his comrades proved, in practice, the viability of Trotsky's call for the workers' united front against fascism. They recruited members of both the KPD and the SPD, together with comrades of the Leninbund and the Communist Youth, into a defence organisation. It was able to keep the Nazis out of the district even on the night of 30 January 1933 when Hitler was appointed Chancellor.

As a member of the national leadership of the Left Opposition in Germany, he worked closely with Trotsky's son, Leon Sedov, to establish the underground organisation, key elements of which survived the whole Nazi period. Oskar himself was captured, im-

prisoned and tortured in 1934 but gave nothing away.

Released in 1936, he returned to underground work. During the war years, although blacklisted, he found work through old contacts and comrades who had not forgotten him, despite having themselves capitulated to one degree or another. Whilst working on a building site on Germany's north coast he collaborated with French and Russian POW's, enabling some to escape.

Back in Berlin in 1944, he was put to work clearing the air raid damage inflicted by the Allies, but concentrated far more on repairing the political damage done by the Nazis. With their defeat and the entry of the Soviet Armed Forces into Berlin, Oskar took a leading role in refounding trade union organisation.

His reputation can, perhaps, be best judged by the fact that members of the underground Communist Party organisation invited him to join their Party branch and to take a leading role in the district organisation. At the same time, via American Trotskyists in the occupying forces, he re-established contact with the International, reorganised the International Communists of Germany (IKD) and began publishing *Der Marxist*.

In 1947, however, the long arm of the KGB finally caught up with Oskar Hippe. For fifteen months he was held and tortured as they tried to prise out of him the names of his contacts. Doubting even his own capacity to stand the sight of his wife and daughter being tortured, he attempted to hang himself in his cell rather than betray his comrades. After this, the Stalinists contented themselves with sentencing him to 25 years in prison.

Released in the aftermath of de-Stalinisation in 1956, he discovered the dramatic changes that had taken place in the Trotskyist movement with the 1953 split. The German organisation, however, had not split but accepted the leadership of the International Secretariat (IS). Pablo's perspective of possibly centuries of Stalinism was not one that Oskar Hippe could accept and his sympathies lay with the International Committee.

Nonetheless, like the IS supporters, he decided to enter the SPD in order to gain an area of political activity. Perhaps mindful of his own early experience, he concentrated on educational work with the youth organisations, siding with them against the leadership in the 1960s. He finally resigning from the SPD in 1968 in protest at the party's support for the Emergency Law which was used against the newly-radicalised youth and students.

Throughout the 1970s, Oskar Hippe remained in constant contact with the developing "Trotskyist" groups, advising and arguing on the basis of his long experience and always emphasising the need to educate members in the fundamental principles from which he himself never strayed. Right up to the mid-1980s, when falling health limited his energies, Oskar Hippe remained an active comrade and an inspiration to all who met him.

In the stormy years that now lie ahead of the German and, indeed, the whole European, working class there could be no finer example of what it means to be a communist. ■



**F**OR OVER sixty years Trotsky was the target of the Kremlin's lie machine. His writings were suppressed. His views were wildly misrepresented. He was branded a criminal and an inveterate enemy of the Soviet state.

As recently as 1986 one Soviet "expert" on Trotskyism could write that Trotskyists in the late 1930s, "hoped that the Soviet Union would suffer a defeat in the event of war . . . In directions sent out to his collaborators, Trotsky called on them to establish direct contacts with the governments of fascist Germany and militarist Japan." (Vasetsky, *Trotskyism Today*, 1986)

This tissue of lies was standard fare in the Moscow Trials of the 1930s. In the capitalist west Communist Party members and sympathisers endorsed each and every charge.

By discrediting Trotsky in this way, Stalin's goal was to seal the Soviet workers off from Trotsky's political views and, internationally, to marginalise the Trotskyists. A second motive for the endless calumnies was to justify the physical liquidation of Trotsky and his followers. In the camps of the USSR they were shot or worked to death. Throughout the world they were hunted down by the secret police and murdered.

Stalinism's death agony has, to an extent, changed all of this. Moscow's "red professors" no longer try to sustain the big lie. Gradually, Trotsky is being brought in out of the cold. But how far can this reassessment of Lenin's chief collaborator in 1917 and founder of the Red Army go?

Gorbachev's reforms have involved a war on the arbitrariness of bureaucratic rule and pressure to abide by "legality". This has meant a critical examination of past judicial practice, especially under Stalin.

### Frame-ups

Attention has focused on the three infamous Moscow Trials of 1935, 1937 and 1938. These were amongst the greatest frame-ups and show trials in history. On 4 February 1988 the Supreme Court of the USSR finally decreed that the seven charged in the third Moscow trial, chief among them being Bukharin, were innocent and were re-habilitated.

Two other leading old Bolsheviks—Kamenev and Zinoviev—were likewise cleared of all charges.

Trotsky's judicial rehabilitation has yet to come and this issue provides the bureaucracy with a dilemma. As the chief defendant in absentia in all the Moscow Trials he is implicitly cleared along with those who were absolved in 1988 and after. Yet to legally clear him, to restore his citizenship, to compensate his family would all lead in the direction of making his works freely available inside the USSR.

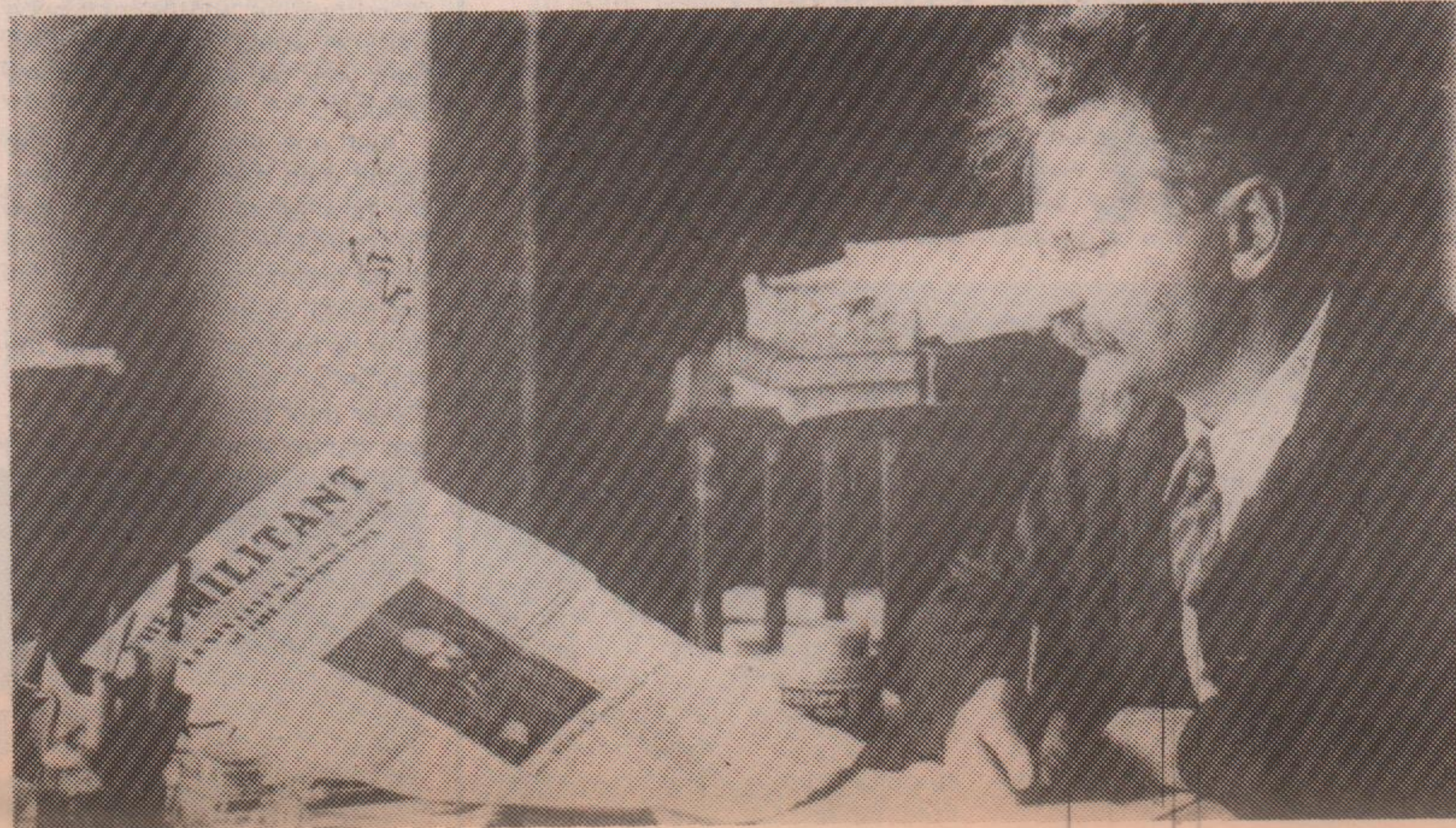
This is a dangerous game for Stalin's heirs. Unlike Bukharin, Trotsky was the scourge of the whole bureaucracy; Bukharin on the other hand led one *faction* of the bureaucracy, but shared its fundamental outlook, privileges and programme. Trotsky stood for the overthrow of the whole bureaucracy by political revolution, Bukharin was a servant of Stalin.

So rather than rush to clear Trotsky of all the charges of terrorism against the USSR the process of glasnost has led to a limited public discussion of Trotsky's political legacy.

In the wake of the decrees clearing Kamenev and Zinoviev Dr Afanasyev, the Director of the Institute for State Archivists, announced an 18 month investiga-

# The prophet rehabilitated?

*Fifty years ago Leon Trotsky was assassinated by a Stalinist agent. His death came at the end of a decade long slander campaign orchestrated by Moscow: he was a paid agent of Hitler, a pawn of every imperialist government and the chief saboteur of Soviet industrialisation. Now, under glasnost in the USSR, the old lies are being put aside. But, as Mark Abram reports, new falsehoods are being fashioned to serve the interests of the enemies of the Russian Revolution.*



tion into the Stalin terror, called for the rehabilitation of Trotsky and proposed the publication of his works. Within two months *Pravda* published excerpts from a study by General Volkogonov on relations between Stalin and Trotsky. These extracts accepted that Stalin had Trotsky killed and that the latter was innocent of the grotesque criminal charges made against him.

The May 1989 issue of *Gorizont* (circulation of 100,000) contained Trotsky's 1939 article "Joseph Stalin". The penultimate chapter of Deutcher's biography of Trotsky, *The Prophet Outcast*, was published in a monthly journal and Trotsky's *Stalinist School of Falsification* has been serialised in the major periodical *Problems of History*.

But—of course—the choice of Trotsky material and the commissioning of academic appreciations of his life is not accidental. All of it serves someone's purpose. But whose, and to what end?

There are two approaches to the rehabilitation of Trotsky. Both seek to paint him in negative colours. The first, and most vile, is to give recognition to Trotsky's prominence in the October Revolution only to prove that revolution was the malevolent work of the Jews. This Great Russian chauvinist exercise is not the fringe activity of a few crazed anti-Semites. One of the appointees to the newly formed Presidential Council (Gorbachev's inner-cabinet) is Valentin Rasputin who told the *New York Times* recently:

"I think today the Jews here should feel responsible for the sin of having carried out the revolution, and for the shape it took. They should feel responsible for the terror . . . that existed during the revolution and especially after the revolution."

The second, and more prevalent, project in recent Soviet historiog-

raphy is to rescue Trotsky from the charge of criminality only to present him as equally responsible, with Stalin, for the degeneration of the revolution after Lenin's death. Volkogonov talks of Trotsky as the "demon of the revolution". In the April 1990 issue of *Sputnik* the expert on Trotskyism mentioned earlier—Nikolai Vasetsky—treats his audience to a piece entitled "Lev Trotsky: Personal and Political Profile". This article makes no mention of Vasetsky's

### The Trotskyist Manifesto

The programme of the LRCI

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**Workers Power, BCM 7750,  
London WC1 3XX**

earlier and repeated charges of terrorism and pro-imperialism. Neither does it account for the change in attitude by this prominent anti-Trotskyist time-server.

The article attempts to chronicle the differences between Lenin and Trotsky before and after 1917. The recitation of these differences is of a piece with the first phase of anti-Trotskyism in the USSR in the 1920s, namely that Trotsky was never really a Bolshevik and only joined the party in order to further his career during the revolution itself. Not one of the debates, carried through democratically in the period before Stalin turned the party into a police regime, is placed in its historical context. Not once does this paid liar acknowledge that Trotsky himself was the first to accept, publicly, that on a number of issues he had been wrong.

A flavour of the piece can be found in the assertion that Trotsky's theory of permanent

revolution (unexplained of course) "denied Lenin's theory of the possibility of socialist development in one country." (p101)

Vasetsky does not feel obliged, in the interests of honesty, to inform anyone that Trotsky did not deny the "possibility of socialist development" inside the USSR any more than Lenin; but they both rejected the fantasy that socialism could be achieved within the confines of one country, especially a relatively backward one like Russia in 1917.

But the bulk of the article is reserved for an implicit attack on Trotsky's centralising tendencies. We are told that this is seen in his attitude to the militarisation of labour during the Civil War. We are told that he "could not fully accept NEP" and that in Trotsky's devotion to planning and industrialisation we see the forerunner of Stalin's command-administrative economic system in the 1930s when "his [Stalin's] methods virtually lost their substantial difference from the Trotskyite policy."

Thus, although they were mortal enemies, Trotsky and Stalin are presented as in fact two sides of the same coin, whose "two 'theories', each in its own way, tended to oust Leninism".

In reality, Trotsky and the Left Opposition argued for a sustainable and proportionate industrialisation of the USSR in the mid 1920s when Stalin and Bukharin's policies were deepening private property in the countryside and preparing a catastrophe in agriculture which, as predicted, duly occurred.

Moreover Trotsky had nothing to do with the administrative liquidation of market relations in the late 1920s and condemned it as madness, destined to lead to shortages and inflation. Above all Trotsky parted company with the "capitulators" formerly in the Left Opposition who felt that Stalin had

adopted Trotsky's policies after 1928. On the contrary, Trotsky argued that there could be no genuine socialist industrialisation policy while planning was purely bureaucratic, and the only force that could in reality initiate and check the mechanism of planning—the workers themselves—were excluded from decision-making. The need for proletarian democracy was at the centre of Trotsky's resistance to Stalin. This was the reason he was murdered.

It is these truths that the present batch of academics are interested in keeping from a reawakening Soviet workers' movement. Among the oppositionists, it was only the Trotskyists who were not complicit in Stalin's crimes. That is why they were butchered in their thousands in the camps. We alone have a clear conscience and clean hands.

To the Soviet workers themselves we say, demand the complete and unconditional re-habilitation of Trotsky, clear his name of all criminal charges, restore his citizenship and the rights of his family. Most importantly, demand the publication of his complete works, uncensored, widely available and at a price workers can afford.

### Crisis

In those works Soviet workers will find a revolutionary answer to the crisis they now face. Four months before the ice pick was plunged into his brain on the orders of Stalin, "Cain Stalin" as Trotsky called him, Trotsky wrote an open letter to the workers of the Soviet Union. It had to be smuggled in and received minimal circulation. Today it should be read by all, for its message is relevant to all:

"The lying Stalinist press has been maliciously deceiving you for a long time on all questions, including those which relate to myself and my political co-thinkers. . . Tens of thousands of revolutionary fighters have fallen before the muzzles of GPU mausers in the USSR and in countries abroad, especially in Spain. All of them were branded as agents of fascism. Do not believe this abominable slander! Their crime consisted of defending workers and peasants against the brutality and rapacity of the bureaucracy. . . Against the imperialist foe we will defend the USSR with all our might. However, the conquests of the October Revolution will serve the people only if they prove themselves capable of dealing with the Stalinist bureaucracy, as in their day they dealt with the Tsarist bureaucracy and the bourgeoisie."

These are the words of a revolutionary. They are the words of a man whose whole life was dedicated to the cause of the working class, to war against the oppressors. The Soviet masses will be inspired by Trotsky to make new conquests in the struggle for real socialism. There is every reason to be optimistic that they are already striving to learn the truth about Trotsky. This is testified to by a letter the LRCI recently received from some Soviet students:

"We are interested in the very person who was L Trotsky. . . You see in spite of the role which this outstanding man has played, literature about him . . . is not always objective. Unfortunately, we know neither his works nor the works of his modern disciples. We won't be able to understand much about modern processes if we don't analyse this world phenomenon. And you alone can help us. If you send us . . . your aims and programme you'll support a lot those who strive for truth in the past and in the present." ■



**A**NYATTEMPT to reforge the traditions of revolutionary communism within the Irish working-class must come to terms with the legacy of James Connolly, and of the Easter insurrection in 1916. During his own lifetime, Connolly was the most important Irish representative of the social democracy of the Second International, and was a contemporary of Lenin and Luxemburg. His attempt to apply Marxism to Irish conditions in a changing international context marked him out as an innovative thinker and elevates him above any other Irish Marxist.

As an internationalist, a revolutionary opponent of capitalism, an advocate of women's emancipation, organiser of the Citizens Army, and as martyr, Connolly lives on in the consciousness of the Irish working class movement.

Every force within the Irish left, from the Workers Party to the Socialist Workers Movement and the IRSP, claim to stand in his tradition.

But until now, there has been no systematic Marxist analysis of his politics, unblemished by the influences of Stalinism, nationalism or hagiography. The Irish Workers Group have produced a work which reveals both the innovative qualities and the ambiguities in Connolly's thought. This book challenges the confusions of Connolly's legacy which remain at the heart of Irish revolutionary traditions:

## CONNOLLY A Marxist Analysis



Andy Johnston  
James Larragy  
Edward McWilliams

"Here was someone whose lifetime objective was to bring the working class to the head of the national struggle overcoming sectarian divisions and uniting workers of all creeds, yet patently failed to grasp the nature and importance of the obstacles that stood in the path to this goal, namely the respective holds of protestant unionism and Catholic bourgeois nationalism on vital sections of the rural masses and the working class itself."

The authors examine the roots of Connolly's errors, the context within which his apprenticeship to Marxism took place. They show how Connolly's inheritance from the Social Democratic Federation (SDF) and, via the SDF, from the

# Connolly's legacy

Nick Stone reviews  
*Connolly—A Marxist Analysis*  
A. Johnston, J. Larragy,  
E. McWilliams  
Published by the Irish Workers  
Group  
£3.75 UK £3.90 Ireland

Russian Narodniks, led to flaws in both his theory and political programme.

The SDF was the predominant Marxist trend in Edinburgh in 1889 when Connolly was recruited to socialism. The schematic determinism of the SDF, which overlooked the role of conscious revolutionary action, strategy and tactics, had a decisive influence on Connolly's thought.

Connolly developed the belief that national independence struggles were intrinsically directed against the needs of colo-

rial powers and foreign markets. His populist conclusion was that revolutionary nationalists and the Irish peasantry, having won national freedom, could by-pass capitalism. Further influenced by the revolutionary populism of James Fintan Lalor, Connolly believed that the uncompromising nationalist would inevitably turn to socialism for a solution.

Connolly's famous slogan: "The cause of Labour is the cause of Ireland" embodies a basic programmatic confusion. His identification of the principles of national independence and "land to the tiller" with the socialist revolution itself meant that he failed to develop a method whereby socialists could fight to break the poor peasantry from the bourgeoisie and win them to the side of the proletariat.

The authors also show how Connolly's conception of Irish his-

tory gave full expression to his hybrid of Marxism and populism. Starting from the view that pre-Norman Ireland was a communal and democratic Irish nation he portrays all resistance to Norman and English conquests as revolts of labour against the "alien" system of private property, denying any historically progressive role to the bourgeoisie in Ireland.

Against Connolly, the authors reassert the Marxist analysis of history and the transition between modes of production to show how Connolly's misunderstanding contributes to errors of revolutionary strategy.

## Nationalism

For Connolly, the national struggle is defined as having the same class content across the epochs—the conflict of communal property with private property in the means of production. By defining the national struggle in these terms, the identity of interest between native capitalism and Irish nationalism is ignored. The class interests of the proletariat are falsely equated with a narrow national interest.

On Easter Monday, 24 April 1916, James Connolly, having fused the Irish Citizen Army with the revolutionary wing of the Irish Volunteers, The Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB), embarked on the Dublin insurrection through which he sought to deal a death blow to British imperialism and proclaim an Irish republic. Twelve days later the city centre of Dublin stood in ruins and Connolly was executed. The book explains:

"Like Lenin and Trotsky, however vital our criticisms, we stand by the Rising and defend it as a heroic blow... directed at the heart of imperialism, a blow, therefore, for the proletariat and oppressed everywhere." (p166)

## Subordinate

They demonstrate, however, the way in which Connolly's misconception of the national question, led him to subordinate the interests of the working class, politically and militarily, to the IRB.

Connolly was wrong to lower the red flag to the green, to subordinate the working class programme to that of the revolutionary democratic petty bourgeoisie. As the authors say:

"The legacy of that error is still visited on the Irish working class in the appropriation by Sinn Fein of the mantle of Connolly in the name of an anti-imperialist programme which, even if fully carried out, would never bring the working class to power." (p166)

The IWG's substantive new work asserts, with Marx, the necessity of an independently organised party of the proletariat. Such a party must re-arm the working class in the tradition of Lenin and Trotsky, for the programme of permanent revolution and the goal of a workers' state as the key task on the road to a new international socialist order.■

# Revolutionary fossils

**S**TEVE GOULD is a first rate populariser of evolutionary biology. A Marxist, he consciously uses the dialectical method in both understanding and explaining evolution. In this latest book he makes full use of all his skills in telling the story of one of the most stunning biological discoveries of the 20th century.

For hundreds of millions of years, life consisted merely of single cells floating in the sea. Around 570 million years ago the first multicellular organisms appeared, in a rapid explosion of diversity. There was very little fossil evidence to show us what these first creatures looked like until 1912, when US geologist Charles Walcott discovered a deposit of fossils in a Canadian rock formation known as the Burgess Shale. According to Walcott, the beautiful small sea animals he found all corresponded to the major groups of animals we know today.

So far, so ordinary. For most of this century the Burgess Shale has been an interesting footnote in evolutionary history rather than the stuff of a scientific revolution. However, in the 1970s, one Professor Waddington of Cambridge decided to re-examine Walcott's fossils and began a process which has fundamentally changed how we look at the world.

A new version of life's history has emerged. The Burgess Shale organisms, far from all representing primitive forms of existing types of animal, more often represent bizarre mixtures of animals which are completely unknown—and are indeed impossible—today.

There are weird animals like *Nectocaris* which is a mixture of a chordate (like a vertebrate) and an arthropod (like an insect). Others, such as *Opabinia*, look frankly ridiculous and do not seem related to any other organism, whilst probably the most striking of the bunch is the aptly named *Hallucigenia*.

Early life was not "primitive" and "undeveloped" as school biology

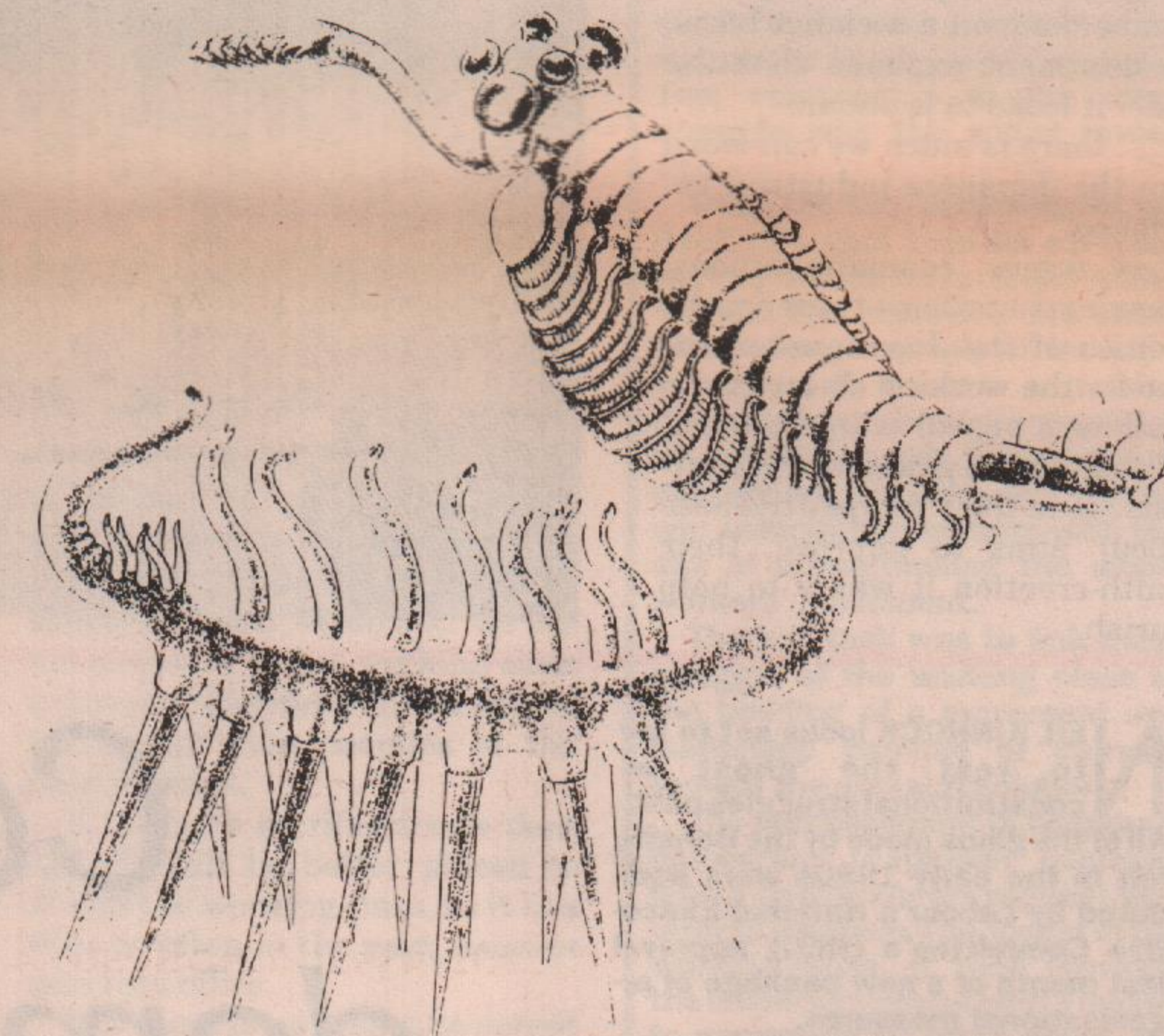
text books suggest. In fact it possessed a diversity of form which is literally fantastic by the pedestrian standards of life today. Over hundreds of millions of years, life on our planet has lost an unimaginable pool of diversity.

The range of animals we see today is infinitely smaller than it could have been. Although there are far more species in existence now than at the time of the Burgess Shale, their diversity is far far less. For example, today there are over a million species of insects, but the group to which the insects belong, the arthropods, has only three basic designs (of which the insects are one). At the time of the Burgess Shale there were more than twenty different ways of organising an arthropod.

What happened to these strange beasts? Why did they disappear? As yet, we have no answer, but it is clear that some enormous change took place which wiped out a massive variety of organisms, leaving only a few different types, which gave rise to all subsequent animal life. Gould's central point is that there was nothing pre-ordained about which types survived and which did not.

Those types that survived massive global change were not necessarily the most successful before such a change took place. Chance factors have played a fundamental role in shaping life by providing new conditions upon which natural selection could work, and by selecting—sometimes randomly—a new sub-group of animals to survive.

There is thus no inevitable, direct line from the massive diversity of the Burgess Shale to today's world, dominated by mammals and insects. Had other events intervened, other chance events taken place, a very different world would have developed. Gould uses this point to destroy a major misconception about the nature of evolution and humanity's place in the universe. Most people conceive of evolution as a process of increasing complexity,



Top: Opabinia, bottom: Hallucigenia

of ever more refined organisms, with humanity at the pinnacle.

But the greatest diversity is to be found at the beginning of life, not now. And if there was nothing inevitable about the extinction of the frankly bizarre creatures which lived so long ago, then there was nothing inevitable about the evolution of human beings, or even of consciousness.

Why was Walcott, the discoverer of these fossils, not able to understand their revolutionary nature? Why did he insist on categorising them all into the animal groups which we see today? And why was Waddington able to see things so differently?

Walcott was a deeply conservative and religious man who clung to the traditional view of evolution as an inevitable progression, leading inexorably to the development of humanity. In this world view it was absolutely impossible that the Burgess Shale organisms could represent anything other than primitive forms of the major animal groups we know today.

Waddington, whilst no revolutionary, used a far more dialectical method, seeing evolution as having no overall trend, but rather consisting of a series of historical events which, taken together, form the overall picture.

Gould shows that science is not the neutral, value-free enterprise it

is normally presented as. All science is influenced by preconceptions and by unconscious bias, notably when it comes to interpreting results.

The best scientists have to break out of the straight-jacket of rigid, formal logic, and use another method, that of the dialectic, in which movement and change—not fixed categories—are the starting point.

The importance of this method is true for all sciences, but especially for the historical sciences such as evolutionary biology which study development and change. In a passionate defence of evolutionary biology, Gould shows the power of historical explanations based on an understanding of the dialectic of change.

This book gives a sense of the excitement of scientific discovery and the sweep of evolutionary ideas that have shaken the world to its foundations over the last 150 years. It shows, both implicitly and explicitly, the importance of change and of a dialectical understanding. Well written and accessible, it is certainly recommended.■

Wonderful life by Stephen Jay  
Gould. Hutchinson Radius 1990  
347 £14.95  
Reviewed by JackTully



**'ASSUME A Labour government'** was the advice given in a recent issue of the *Economist*. After years of denouncing Labour as a party unfit to govern modern capitalist Britain, whole sections of the bosses are now resigned to Kinnock being the next Prime Minister.

This is a measure of Mr Kinnock's success in radically transforming the Labour Party. In both 1983 and 1987 Labour went to the polls with the legacy of internal strife of the early 1980s like a ball and chain around its ankles. Since the last election Kinnock has decisively snapped the chain. With Thatcher now widely hated he has successfully fashioned Labour into a realistic alternative to her.

Millions of workers will see this as a good thing. Exhausted by the years of Tory rule they share the sentiment of Labour's leadership expressed by one former "left" in the front-bench team, Robin Cook:

"Eight years on, the party is hungry for power and will now ruthlessly push aside anybody who puts their own personal or factional priorities ahead of the party winning."

The "anybody" in question is the party's left wing, the people held responsible for Labour's past defeats. And "ruthless" sums up the way in which they have been dealt with. The policies they fought for—unilateral nuclear disarmament, nationalisation, repeal of the Tory anti-union laws—have all been ditched.

### Reforms

The reforms in the constitution that were won by the left in the early 1980s, aimed at holding the leadership to account, were first undermined and are now being completely reversed. Rank and file left wingers, especially those grouped around papers like *Militant*, have been systematically purged. So much so that they are now cowed and willing to shut up to avoid incurring the wrath of the all powerful right wing leadership.

Every action of the leadership is designed to reassure those they hope to serve if they do get elected—the bosses. And no policy, no form of organisation and no rank and file activist is worth the risk of alienating the multi-millionaire magnates who constitute the real rulers of Britain.

The left's cowardice, its fatal addiction to half-measures, has paved the way for the right's victories. And the real meaning of those victories is embodied in the policies Labour will pursue if it achieves office.

During and after the Mid-Staffordshire by-election the Tories repeatedly accused Labour of having no policies. This charge has been echoed by many in and around the party itself, particularly those influenced by the Communist Party of Great Britain. "Blandness" is the word they frequently use to describe Labour's political programme.

It is certainly true that Labour's presentation, dominated as it now is by the dictates of the media, is bland. But the core of Labour's programme, busily being crafted in secret by unelected committees, is not at all empty of content. It is a carefully wrought reformist programme that will inevitably lead Labour, in power, to attack its working class supporters. To suggest otherwise is to disarm those supporters for the struggles that lie ahead.

Labour's Policy Review, adopted by the last conference, is the basis of the manifesto that will be put before the electorate. At its core lie Labour's proposals for dealing with the two central questions of Brit-

# Policies to please the bosses

*Millions of workers will be looking to Kinnock to rescue them from the misery of the Thatcher years. Arthur Merton explains why they are in danger of having their hopes cruelly betrayed*

ish politics—the economy and the unions.

After more than ten years of Thatcher devastating the lives of working class people it is surely not too much to ask, even of reformists, that they proceed from the basis of making good the damage. Not so the Policy Review. Its introduction centres on the best means of constructing a competitive capitalist economy in which the laws of the market predominate:

"The single most important requirement of economic policy is to make Britain internationally competitive... We have to create the economic context in which wealth-creation can flourish first."

And in case anybody thinks this is to be done on a socialist basis, the document explains that the model it looks to is Japan:

"... there is much we can learn from the Japanese industrial experience."

Low wages, company unions, vicious exploitation—these are the realities of the Japanese experience for the working class.

Labour's appeal is to the country's handful of powerful industrialists. It is their competitiveness Labour aims to improve, their wealth-creation it wants to help flourish.

Will these improvements somehow benefit the working class? No.

The industrialists have, for centuries, held down our wages, punished us with increasingly rigorous work rates and sacked us when we are no longer useful or affordable. This is all in the nature of capitalism. Wealth-creation necessarily involves exploiting workers.

Like Harold Wilson's in the 1960s, Kinnock's policy is designed to improve the ability of the bosses to exploit us. This is to be done by offering them the things that Thatcher's free market dogma has left them without. Integration into the European Monetary System and a positive approach to 1992 is now Labour policy, in stark contrast to Thatcher's nationalist footdragging.

State intervention will be used but only to regulate the defects of the market by controlling the "natural monopolies"—water and energy. This way the capitalists can be guaranteed low prices.

The infrastructure of capitalist society, its transport and communications system will be massively improved by the intervention of a Labour government so that the trading capacity of the bosses can grow and grow. And, again in place of nationalisation, industry will be buttressed by the establishment of a British Investment Bank to give the bosses loans on the cheap.

Last but not least the bosses will be offered a better trained workforce by Labour, one more suited to present day needs. The current skills shortages that have blighted several sectors of industry reveals how tempting an offer



## Conference democracy – the final curtain?

**NEIL KINNOCK** looks set to lay to rest the ghost of constitutional struggles past. All of the gains made by the Bennite left in the early 1980s were liquidated by Labour's National Executive Committee's (NEC) approval last month of a new package of organisational measures.

True, the proposals still have to go to conference. The TGWU have mumbled something about opposing them. But the size of the majority on the NEC for the changes (22 to 2, only Tony Benn and Dennis Skinner voting against) indicate the scale of support Kinnock has for remodelling the party's structures.

The new proposals will reduce the trade union block vote from 90% to 70%. This will be further reduced as the individual membership of the local parties grows. Policy will be taken out of the hands of conference and placed under the control of a 170 member National Policy Forum, including MPs and a number of representatives from different layers of the party.

This new body will become responsible, through seven commissions, for initiating all party policy. Constituencies and unions will only be allowed to amend its documents.

Elections and votes will be conducted by secret postal votes on a one member one vote principle. A drive to increase the membership from its present 340,000 to one million will be undertaken. Once this is achieved the union vote will be cut to 50%.

The leadership have explained these changes in terms of the need to modernise the party. Women's quotas and the representation of ethnic minorities are to be guaranteed. The traditional divide, when

Labour is in office, between conference and the NEC on the one hand and the PLP and Cabinet on the other, is to be bridged.

None of this amounts to the "democratic" transformation of the party that Kinnock claims he is carrying through. It represents an attack on the limited party democracy that exists today within the constituencies, and a reduction in the influence of the unions.

The ability of conference to formulate policy and the absence of specially reserved places of privilege for the PLP have long been sources of discontent for the leadership. The Bennite reforms compounded these problems. They gave a voice, however inadequately, to rank and file activists.

The new reforms are aimed directly at destroying the influence of the "activists". Describing the real motivation for the changes Tom Sawyer explained that the party had:

"... come to terms with the

inadequacies of the present party conference, including its sloganistic, cliché ridden resolutions and debates which go on."

This is rich coming from the party that now specialises in reducing politics to meaningless catchphrases like "meet the challenge, make the change", or the "people who can, not the people who con".

It seems slogans coined by advertising agencies are alright while those honestly put forward for debate by the people who keep the Labour Party going on the ground are taboo.

The leadership are determined to ensure that they are no longer in any way accountable to the mass of active members. Their attempt to conceal this by their offers of secret ballots and a mass membership are deceptions. They want passive members whose only connection with the party is a subscription, a postal vote and a willingness to see politics purely in terms of how well

Labour's TV broadcasts come across.

This is not democracy. This is not involving people in informed discussions, regular activity and open decision making processes. It is a cynical manoeuvre designed to isolate "activists" from the mass membership.

The cutting of union influence has a different purpose. The unions, as Labour's pay masters, have been regarded as their policy masters too. Kinnock and his crew know full well that this displeases the bosses. They want to ensure that the PLP is seen to be in control of the party. The union barons cannot be allowed to act as power brokers, but merely as one wing of a broad party.

All of this constitutes an attempt to "de-class" the party, to make it a modern "social democracy" rather than an old fashioned "workers' party". And Kinnock knows that in this he has plenty of allies amongst the union bureaucrats themselves. They are anxious to "modernise"



this is to the bosses.

Page after page of the Review outlines the details of these measures. There is not a whiff of socialism about them. They represent Kinnock's concessions to the gains that the bosses have made under Thatcher, combined with his solution to the problems that her policies have created for them. They will be implemented by a reformed Department of Trade and Industry. In case the bosses are anxious that this will be an "interventionist" meddler, the Policy Review makes clear:

"It will leave to industry, private investment and the market those aspects of development which they are best at doing, but it will identify with industry and the trade unions the contribution which must necessarily be made by government."

To the bosses, who are well aware that Britain's road system under Thatcher's free market is in no better state of repair now than it was in 1977, this is a seductive offer. To the working class it offers no compensation for the deprivations they have endured during the same period.



themselves in a new realist fashion and are just as eager to marginalise the "activists".

Just as it is necessary to fight the new wave of policies, so it is necessary to fight this attempt to neuter conference, the rank and file and the unions. And just as it is necessary to fight for revolutionary policies so it is necessary to fight for workers' democracy within the party. We do not want to cling to the undemocratic use of the block vote. We want its thoroughgoing democratic transformation so that it becomes the representative voice of trade union members inside the party, not the bargaining chip for an unaccountable general secretary. Moreover we favour a mass membership for the party. We are not at all afraid of this. We simply want to ensure that these members are involved in campaigning for the working class, supporting its struggles and fully participating in decision making through a direct democracy in which honest debates and open votes are not evils, but the lifeblood of educating and training millions for struggle.

At the moment the fight for these forms of democracy will be conducted by a minority. But a determined rearguard action, one that harasses our enemy, refuses to concede an inch of territory without causing them problems, will begin to win us new adherents. These struggles must be taken into every level of the party and the unions.

Through them we will prepare to turn the tide when the betrayals of the Kinnock leadership are felt by millions. We say to the left throughout the party, join this fight, don't give up and wait for another day. That will simply help our enemies. ■

Labour does, however, attempt to appeal to workers by portraying itself as an enemy of those symbols of the Thatcher years, the City swindlers. The Review is not short on invective against the fast buck merchants who move capital around the globe to secure short term mega-profits. Kinnock goes so far as to declare that:

"The Conservatives are the party for the City. We are the party for industry."

This is a meaningless declaration. It ignores the reality of the fusion between banking and industrial capital that characterises British capitalism today. It conceals from the workers the truth that the Guinness crooks of the City run swathes of British industry. More importantly the words are not matched by deeds.

One of the most important features of Labour's economic policy is that it will leave intact the structures of the City. The *Economist* noted with glee that:

"A future Labour government would not re-impose exchange controls, and it would not have much time for trade controls."

So how would Labour deal with the City bogeymen?

"We may use tax incentives... to stem the flows of capital abroad."

Handouts to the rich in other words! Nor will the financiers have to fret that the killings they made during Thatcher's numerous privatisations are threatened by Labour. While there is a commitment to renationalise the "natural

to be accepted given his policies have just been agreed by the traditionally more left Scottish TUC) outlines Labour's new plans to legally shackle the unions. The document asserts:

"The issue today is not law or no law; but fair law and unfair law."

By this he means law that is "fair" to both the bosses and the workers. Yet these fair laws are to involve tight restrictions on secondary picketing, on the numbers allowed to picket, on solidarity action, and they will guarantee the rights of courts to sequester union funds.

His package is a slightly modified version of Tory anti-union law. The closed shop will remain banned. Secret ballots are to be legally imposed. And a special labour court, subordinated to appeals to the High Court, is to be set up to rule on disputes. Effective trade union action—including the elementary right to take solidarity action—will all remain outlawed under Labour's new policies.

All of this is, to return to the point we made earlier, not bland but bad—bad from the point of view of working class interests. All of it is designed to help the bosses and hinder our ability to resist them. All of it represents a challenge to the workers who will be voting Labour in the election.

The right wing are clear that the time for talking is over. A recent *Labour Organiser* declared:

"... now the time for discussion is past. We have the policies and

### **Labour has demonstrated its willingness to drop anything in the Policy Review that the bosses may find objectionable. It is reneging on promises even before it has got into office**

monopolies" and British Telecom, the Review is clear that this will not be done in the immediate future. It explicitly rejects the renationalisation of any of the other privatised industries.

No wonder John Smith is being invited to so many City banquets and seminars. No wonder they believe his promises that Labour will exercise tight control over public spending, maintain their gains from Thatcher's tax changes and ensure that "there will be no dash for growth under the Labour government".

On top of these economic pledges Labour has demonstrated its willingness to drop anything in the Policy Review that the bosses may find objectionable. It is reneging on promises even before it has got into office.

This is clear from Labour's attitude to the unions.

The Review still bears the marks of Labour's links with the unions. It is riddled with phrases concerning partnership and collaboration. It even goes so far as to declare:

"Labour believes trade unions are the most effective channel through which employees can attain sufficient influence with their employers."

Even though the Review rejects the call to repeal all the Tory anti-union laws, it does contain the offer of an Employees' Charter. This is the most worrying aspect of Labour's policy from the bosses' point of view. It reveals that for all its policy changes Labour remains a reformist workers' party—based on the working class but dedicated to serving capitalism.

In an attempt to reassure the bosses the Review's softness on the unions is being revised, in secret, by Tony Blair. In place of its assertion that the unions should, primarily, regulate themselves, a secret document from Blair (likely

the task now is to promote it [sic] to the electors."

The left have shown, not merely in the past but by their refusal to fight Kinnock in the here and now, that they fundamentally accept this argument. We do not. We are not prepared to see working class interests sacrificed in order to pacify our class enemies at the next election.

If they are sacrificed now then Labour will be better placed to attack the working class, as it has done so often in the past, once its gets into office.

But there is no reason to accept defeat now. There is no need to hide behind the ramparts and wait for happier days. With Thatcher's mounting crisis, with the Poll Tax rebellion, with the economic attacks that will rain down on us as the recession deepens, there will be many opportunities to rally the forces within and outside the Labour Party to fight back against the right.

In the period ahead we need to fight in the unions and the Labour Party, to force new pledges onto the party, pledges to act in our interests, to repeal all anti-union laws and keep the courts out of the unions, to renationalise the industries handed over to the City, to force Labour to adopt a public spending plan designed to repair the social fabric of our lives as well as the roads, to hit the rich not the workers.

The extent to which we can rally militant forces for such a fight in the period ahead will determine not only our chances of victory in the immediate struggles, but also our chances of preventing Labour from turning on its supporters. And it will determine, too, our chances of rallying thousands to the banner of a revolutionary alternative prepared to take on and defeat the bosses once and for all. ■

## IN DEFENCE OF MARXISM



### What is reformism?

**THE WORKING class movement in all countries at all periods is faced with the same fundamental question. What should its attitude be towards the system of production which called it into being as a class—capitalism?**

Should the workers' movement set as its goal the abolition of this system? In most countries the labour movement has formally pledged itself to this task. It has adopted as a "final goal" the idea of a society without private ownership of the means of production, without exploitation. But once this goal has been proclaimed—what is the relation between the immediate day to day struggles for wages, for legal changes within capitalism, and the struggle to abolish capitalism altogether?

Marx and Engels waged a long battle to give a scientific and practical answer. For them the development of the fragmentary economic struggle, waged by groups of workers, into a general political one, waged by all workers against the exploiters, was the only road to the final goal.

Within the First International, Marx and Engels sought to demonstrate that the elemental day to day class struggle had to set itself the objective of the abolition of capitalism via the seizure of political power by the working class. This culmination of the class struggle was the social revolution.

Once the labour movement set itself this goal then its everyday tactics would have to be transformed. The objective of a strike was no longer simply an increase in wages. It became a training ground to teach workers solidarity, fighting spirit, financial and military organisation, the testing and selecting of leaders with the aim of strengthening the whole workers' movement.

The key task was to link every struggle of the working class to the building of a movement and leadership capable of carrying through the social revolution.

The establishment of bourgeois democracy (capitalist economy with a parliamentary regime) was in large measure a conquest of the working class. It then provided the labour movement with a means to pressurise for trade union, political rights and social welfare—a whole series of reforms that improved conditions for the working class within capitalism.

The existence of periods when the capitalist class has been both able to afford, and afraid to refuse, such reforms led to the growth of a whole trend within the broad socialist labour movement which maintained that it was possible to win reforms without interruption until capitalism withered away. This trend—*reformism*—emerged in all the major European states in the 1880s and 1890s as Fabianism in Britain, Possibilism in France and Revisionism in Germany, culminating in their great betrayal of 1914 when all the reformists lined up behind their national ruling classes in the first imperialist war.

This trend became a mass force within the labour movement of the industrialised countries because it rested on a significant layer of the working class itself—what Lenin called the labour aristocracy. As capitalism expanded and developed into its imperialist phase it proved capable of temporarily "buying off" a section of well organised and generally skilled workers with higher than average wage levels, improved social provisions and limited political and trade union rights. In a nutshell these workers believed that they had to resolve their social question

within capitalism and needed to bargain to maintain and extend their gains. Reformism was the political expression of this layer.

The reformists argued that no sudden or "violent" revolution was necessary for the workers' movement to seize power or to introduce socialism. Parliamentary democracy made possible—indeed obligatory—an electoral path to socialism. Governments of the socialist and labour parties would enact a series of reforms which would first ameliorate, then transform and finally abolish capitalism.

Revolutionary socialists like Rosa Luxemburg argued that this reformist strategy was a day dream. However, it would turn into a nightmare if it were actually carried out.

The nature of capitalism—wars, economic crises and political revolutions—obliges governments to act decisively for the ruling class. Every major strike and workers' struggle disrupts the national economy. The legal system enshrines and defends the rights of the employer—to sack workers, to lower wages, to close an unprofitable factory.

No government committed to avoiding a decisive clash with capitalism can totally and unequivocally side with the working class. If it did it would be thwarted by the civil service, judges, the police chiefs and the army. The permanent elements of the state—the military-bureaucratic machine would simply sabotage, overrule or if need be rise in revolt against the "workers' majority" in Parliament, and the reformists themselves have long since become loyal servants of the state.

The reformist leaders therefore preach a programme of the practicable. The labour movement must win elections. This is the only road to power. But this means that no measures can be promised which will rouse the fundamental opposition of the bankers and the industrialists. They control the media which form "public opinion".

Their endorsement of the reformists' programme as "reasonable", "moderate" and "realistic" is essential to winning the middle ground. Of course the goal of socialism—a non-capitalist society—is ruled out from the start. But once the pursuit of power is on—i.e. in a pre-election period—then even the limited reforms that workers have pressured for through the trade unions and the party begin to go over like nine-pins. Even if you laid Labour governments end to end for a century you would not reach the socialist millennium.

It was not simply that the reformists mistakenly sought to use the capitalist state to gradually introducing socialism. Actual socialist and labour governments used the capitalist state to obstruct the struggle for socialism.

Thus these Labour and social democratic governments all prove to be *bourgeois*, pro-capitalist governments despite the occasional partial reforms they carry out. They are *not* a road to socialism. Rosa Luxemburg pointed this out long ago:

"That is why people who pronounce themselves in favour of the method of legislative reform in place and in contradistinction to the conquest of political power and social revolution, do not really choose a more tranquil, calmer and slower road to the same goal, but a *different* goal. Instead of taking a stand for the establishment of a new society they take a stand for the surface modification of the old society." ■



# THE LONGEST WAR

## Ceasefire?

LAST YEAR Tory Northern Ireland minister Peter "babbling" Brooke made his ill fated remarks about a negotiated settlement with the IRA. He enraged the bosses' media by implying that the Irish war would end, like many national liberation wars, through ceasefire and negotiations.

He was quickly whipped into line by his minders. But this has not stopped Sinn Fein leaders from making a grab at the olive branch briefly held out by Brooke.

The Sinn Fein leadership around Adams and McGuinness is anxiously seeking a way out of the current impasse in the national liberation struggle in the North. Martin McGuinness told *Hot Press*:

"It was my opinion and the opinion of some other people within the movement that Mr Brooke was attempting to create—in fact he did create—a mood or a feeling that this was a man who had greater knowledge or understanding of the situation than any previous British Secretary of state."

This is the opposite of the truth. Brooke was so out of touch with the situation that he presumed he had been sent over to carry out traditional Foreign Office custom and practice: "negotiate with the natives". He forgot that in Northern Ireland imperialism not only peddles lies but has to be seen to believe them itself. And British imperialism's biggest lie is that it is winning the Irish war.

Statements from Adams and McGuinness outlining the terms on which the IRA might be prepared to call off the armed struggle show the extent to which the republican leadership feels itself under pressure.

There are a number of factors behind this.

Events in the Soviet Union and East Europe have clearly had some effect both directly and indirectly. For a start many within the republican movement have defended these states as representing some kind of socialism. In 1988 the Sinn Fein Ard Fheis, however ambiguously, supported the Jaruzelski regime against Solidarnosc.

More importantly, the fact that Gorbachev's concessions to western imperialism, involving the withdrawal or cutting back of Soviet material aid to anti-imperialist struggles, has clearly forced many of these movements to seek a compromise far short of the original proclaimed goals of the struggle.

Following the release of Mandela, the ANC is actively engaged in seeking a compromise with South African imperialism. As part of its new "softer" image one ANC leader was drawn to denounce the IRA's struggle as "terrorism"—unjustified by political conditions in Ireland.

On top of this came the defeat of the Sandinistas as a model for their method of achieving national liberation and socialism—a "third way" between communism and capitalism. Their electoral defeat has added to the isolation and disorientation of the republican leaders.

Moreover, Sinn Fein's recent Ard Fheis revealed the deep disappointment at the failure to make any inroads electorally in the South at a time when the left reformists

of the Workers Party and Labour continued to gain strength.

What McGuinness' and Adams' statements reveal is that under such pressure they are moving rightwards.

Certainly they are right to press home the propaganda advantage, reminding British and Irish workers of how Brooke momentarily let the mask of "British invincibility" slip.

But it is surely a sign of desperation to describe the statements of a Tory hereditary imbecile as evidence for a wing within the Tory Party far-sightedly preparing to do business with Sinn Fein once Thatcher has gone. No such wing exists.

Undoubtedly many Tory backbenchers and their racist supporters want out of Ireland. But ruling class strategy is not set out by such people. There is not the slightest indication after twenty years that the British ruling class seriously intend to take such a risk. Even less so now when they sense signs of republican weakness.

The same signs of desperation are evident in Martin McGuinness' claims that:

"The British Labour party has changed its position in relation to the six counties—they are now stating that they believe that the best long term prospect for peace is the unification of Ireland." (*Hot Press*)

Sinn Fein knows only too well that in opposition the Labour Party thrives on saying lots of pious things. In government, however, it will once more assume its responsibility for defending the interests of imperialism.

This bout of clutching at straws reveals the strategic weakness of Sinn Fein. Their nationalist policies, their restricted guerrillaist view of the military struggle and their rejections of revolutionary socialism all mean that they have no perspective for mobilising the majority of Irish workers, North and South, in mass, anti-imperialist, struggle. Yet it will only be by placing the working class, and its methods of class struggle, centre stage that the decisive blow against British imperialism, and its Orange allies, can be delivered. The anti-imperialist struggle must be invested with an unambiguous working class, socialist content.

However, Sinn Fein's flawed strategy does not blind us to the progressive nature of its struggle, and that of the IRA, against the British state. In Britain the majority of workers do not see this. They remain wedded to Britain's policy of repression against the anti-unionist minority in the North.

The principal reason for this is Labour's craven bipartisan policy in Northern Ireland. They and the Tories are as one in deceiving British workers about the real nature of the conflict in the six counties. And this deception is maintained by all sorts of repressive measures, not least the undemocratic media ban on Sinn Fein.

So as the republicans' Stalinist friends desert them it is vital that British workers take up with renewed vigour the fight to force Britain out of Ireland, so that the whole Irish people can decide the future of their country. ■

## JOZEF PINIOR: Restoration and resistance in Poland

*Jozef Pinior was recently expelled from the Polish Socialist Party (Democratic Revolution). Formerly the leader of the left within the PPS(RD), he has now founded the Socialist Political Centre in Poland and is a supporter of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International. In an interview with Workers Power, Pinior explained his current project and outlines the main elements of the present situation. Although we disagree with some of his views we publish this interview as a contribution to the development of the struggle against Stalinism and capitalist restoration in Poland.*

**JP:** The Polish government tried to introduce the International Monetary Fund (IMF) plan in January. In the first place it is aimed at fighting inflation. It stops new wage increases and opens the way for free market prices. There is a plan for the privatisation of the state enterprises, to close factories and to create unemployment.

At the moment it is only a plan. It has not started yet. Unemployment in Poland is now 250,000 and there is very deep impoverishment. On the one hand, workers have a lot of illusions in the possibility of free market reforms, capitalism with a human face etc. On the other hand you have the first results of these reforms: unemployment and deeper poverty.

As a result you have a new wave of radicalisation inside society and inside Solidarity itself. It is simply a trade union-style, economic radicalisation without a clear political platform. But it is a truly working class resistance against the austerity measures: it is the first step.

**WP: Does it take the form of strikes?**

**JP:** There was a strike movement in January amongst the miners in Lower Silesia. On the same day as the Solidarity National Congress began in Gdansk the Solidarity branch in Gdansk started a transport strike. These first strikes are not massive, but I am sure they will develop on a larger scale.

There is another problem. You have a lot of frustration and demoralisation inside society and also within Solidarnosc. There is no serious, and I mean serious, left alternative in this situation. And so you get the rise of reactionary political currents: xenophobia, anti-semitism etc. They are marginal now but there is a real danger that they could become a mass political force.

I made a big error two years ago. I thought it was a mechanical process that radical workers would move to the left. But it is not a mechanical process. You must have a base, Marxist cadres, strong organisation. Without this there is the danger that the masses will come under the sway of a reactionary platform.

**WP: How was the workers' hostility to the austerity plan reflected in the recent Solidarity Congress?**

**JP:** I think there is a different situation now to the situation just after the round table discussions with the Stalinists. Then there was a complete lack of democracy. Walesa nominated people etc. Now there is democratic mechanism in a broad sense. Workers can elect people from factories to a regional conference, from there you can elect people to a national conference. The real problem is there is no political alter-

native to Walesa's leadership.

At the National Congress Walesa maintained control of the leadership and apparatus. But Solidarity is a labour movement and within it there is freedom to form horizontal co-ordination structures. In the first place this was a Congress for the benefit of the leadership. But we must remember that it will be very difficult for this leadership to change themselves into a new labour aristocracy. It is possible but it will be a very difficult process.

**WP: That raises the question of Walesa's project. Does he want to become the leader of a labour bureaucracy or a Bonapartist president of Poland?**

**JP:** In the Solidarity leadership there are two main projects. One is around Walesa who wants to be President and this will pose a real danger of authoritarianism. He supports the IMF programme and if he wants to continue to do this he must attack workers' rights. It is my opinion that the restoration of capitalism will depend on class struggle. There will naturally be resistance to unemployment and closed factories. So the government must attack the workers' political rights. But workers' rights, political rights, these are Solidarity's symbols. There is the contradiction.

*I thought it was a mechanical process that radical workers would move to the left. But it is not a mechanical process.*

You have another group around Michnik. This is close to the right wing of social democracy's project for Europe. Co-operate with big imperialist capital to create conditions for restoration on Scandinavian lines.

In Poland there is no place for a real social democratic party. If you want to be social democratic you must at least do something for the workers: shoes, housing, health etc. But there is no place for such politics in Poland in this situation. In Poland it is not possible for imperialism to build capitalism with a human face. From this point on the process of restoration will not be a peaceful process. It will involve violence against the workers. In the long term it is not possible for the Walesa group to defeat the workers. There will be divisions and splits in the ranks of the leadership and resistance to Walesa.

**WP: But that is where the question of the crisis of leadership becomes crucial. At the Solidarnosc conference there was no significant reflection of rank and file opposition. What about the official trade unions, the OPZZ?**

**JP:** Everybody remembers the imposition of Martial Law. It drew a deep border between the workers and the official trade union leaders; they were completely discredited. Now the OPZZ are against the austerity measures on the level of Stalinist militants, but it was not possible for them to organise strikes at the level of the factories.

**WP: Did they try?**

**JP:** Yes, but it wasn't possible. I don't think it is possible for them to organise the workers. In the factories they are completely discredited.

**WP: So to what extent do you think the bureaucratic caste still exists? For example, recent Solidarity literature suggests that the next free elections will effectively destroy the bureaucracy, the nomenklatura etc. Is the old Stalinist caste intact?**

**JP:** It is a very important question because it raises the problem of the nature of the state. In my opinion we now have a period in which this caste is trying to change itself into a class. As a central bureaucracy they are evidently open for imperialism but they must control this process. Without control they will be committing historic hara-kiri.

At the round table the Solidarity leaders agreed to leave the Stalinists in control of the state apparatus, the economy, the army particularly. Remember Walesa stopped the revolutionary process against the Stalinists so yes, they do still exist. But this process isn't finished. It is a period of transition; it is impossible for the Stalinists to stabilise the situation. Like Gorbachev in the USSR they haven't got an answer.

**WP: How did you come to break with the PPS (RD)?**

**JP:** My plan was for a multi-current political party but it was impossible to build such a party when all the labour movement was inside Solidarnosc. It was impossible to build a serious political party outside of Solidarity. From last December sectarianism developed within the PPS(RD).

Fighting occurred inside the party between many different currents. We had a lot of political differences. Some of us claim our political roots in the October 1917 revolution, other currents around Ikonowicz organised anti-Trotskyist hysteria. They expelled Trotskyists from the party.

Another difference was that they wanted to organise an electoral list with the emigre Polish Socialist Party, which stands absolutely in the Pilsudski tradition. We wanted to be independent in the May elections with our political platform.

It was impossible to build such a political party. So we have decided to work as a Socialist Political Centre. It is an open group—some of us are close to the Fourth International, some not. We have tried to set up a publishing house, to publish bulletins, to have discussions about a revolutionary alternative and to organise workers around this centre.

We work inside the rank and file of Solidarity to try to organise factory committees, organise strikes, demonstrations etc. The Socialist Political Centre is the first step towards building a serious political party. ■

For an analysis of the programme of the PPS (RD) read *Self Management or Self Delusion in Stalinism in Crisis* available from **Workers Power**



## USSR

The crisis of the Soviet bureaucracy is deepening week by week. Gorbachev is faced not only with the threat of national revolt but the disintegration of the Communist Party and a worsening economic situation. **Colin Lloyd** examines Gorbachev's response to the crisis. **John Hunt** outlines the growing divisions in the CPSU.

**P**ERESTROIKA WAS meant to be the answer to the crisis of bureaucratic planning. Now *perestroika* itself is in crisis. The Soviet bureaucracy is frantically looking for an escape route only to find every exit blocked.

The 13th Plan for the Soviet economy, agreed in November 1989, represented a victory for those in the bureaucracy who wanted to slow down market reforms in the USSR and combine them with a centralised attempt to plan a way out of the crisis. It outlined a crash programme of production for consumer goods, aiming to increase supplies in the shops by 13%.

But the bureaucratic plan has proved woefully inadequate. Whilst the supply of electronic consumer goods has gone up by between 11 and 14% the supply of basic foodstuffs fell by 4%. As it became clear that the undemocratic and chaotic planning mechanisms of the bureaucracy had, literally, failed to deliver the goods, Gorbachev made a drastic turn to the pro-capitalist marketeers in the central bureaucracy.

Deputy Prime Minister Abalkin and his economic adviser, Nikolai Petrakoff, have for months been advocating a Polish-style radical reform programme. They wanted to open the door to privatisation, mass unemployment, free market prices and the dismantling of the bureaucratic plan.

In response to Gorbachev's go-

# Crisis deepens

ahead to the Petrakoff Plan the *Economist* magazine urged investors to:

"Cross your fingers. One of the biggest economic adventures of all time is, with luck, about to begin." (24 March)

But both Gorbachev and would-be Russian capitalists proved to be for the moment out of luck. Even Gorbachev's hand-picked Presidential Council failed to agree on the proposed market measures. Even if they ever make it as draft laws to the Supreme Soviet the plans of the radical marketeers will meet stiff resistance.

### Strength

One reason for this is the continued strength of the conservative wing of the bureaucracy in the party and the Supreme Soviet. Another factor is that even Abalkin and Petrakoff are deeply pessimis-

tic about their ability to convince the Russian workers to accept the capitalist economic medicine. Quite simply they have no Solidarnosc; no popular workers' leaders who could sell a Polish style restorationist programme to the masses. Instead they are faced with a growing independent workers' movement prepared to fight austerity. Militant noises have even been forthcoming from the official unions whose bureaucrats fear being outflanked by the unofficial movements. As a result the new laws and measures have been indefinitely postponed.

Gorbachev is emerging more and more as a Bonapartist figure. That is, a leader who can stand above the party and the bureaucracy and subject it to the kind of discipline and repression meted out by Stalin in the 1930s.

At the same time as conceding the end of the constitutional "lead-

ing role of the party" Gorbachev awarded himself sweeping presidential powers. But presidential powers are no use unless backed up by armed force. That is why at the same time as he has lurched towards the pro-capitalists, economically, Gorbachev has made more and more concessions to the military/KGB/conservative planning factions within the bureaucracy.

He has supported moves to expel the Democratic Platform group from the party (see below) and authorised military crackdowns in Azerbaijan and Lithuania. His Presidential Council is stuffed full of bureaucratic conservatives.

Lacking a pliant tool like the Polish Solidarnosc leadership Gorbachev's only option is to drive through pro-capitalist reforms by force. That is why he is repressing the "radicals" within the CPSU at the same time as borrowing their economic programme; giving free rein to the conservative disciplinarians at the same time as seeking to undermine their economic base through market reforms.

The problem is, this situation cannot last. The longer Gorbachev puts off Polish style measures, the more drastic they will have to be in the future. He cannot proceed towards such a solution without enraging the conservatives and provoking mass working class response. Despite his desperate

attempts to lift himself above the conflicting factions Gorbachev is creating the conditions of a political revolutionary crisis.

Workers must make no strategic blocs with any section of the bureaucracy: neither the "democratic" marketeers, the "patriotic" conservatives, nor the Gorbachev faction. Each of these factions are, in their own ways, enemies of the working class and of real workers' power.

### Party

It is not excluded that, in struggle, workers will find it necessary to place demands or strike episodic united fronts with different wings of the bureaucracy at different times and for different goals. However, it is crucial that in these struggles the working class is won to a course of action independent of all of the squabbling factions. The most pressing task is to forge a new working class party that can lead the masses to a genuinely revolutionary solution. Democratic planning, workers' control of production, new soviets and a workers' militia. These are the immediate answers to the crisis of bureaucratic planning. Only the workers have the ability and the material interests to fight for them. To achieve them they must overthrow the bureaucracy once and for all. ■

## A split in the CPSU?

**F**OR OVER sixty years there was no visible organised opposition in the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU). In successive periods those who fell out with the leadership were executed, exiled or demoted. They certainly had no opportunity to present and argue for their political platforms.

All of that is changing very rapidly. The last months have seen both the removal of the constitutional guarantee of the "leading role" of the CPSU and the acceleration of the open fragmentation of the party. This fragmentation is serving to paralyse the party and further undermine its already diminished credibility.

The basic polarity that has emerged is between those who want to keep the USSR essentially in its old form and those who want to speed up the process of marketisation on the road to restoring capitalism in the USSR.

In the western media the radical marketisers have been given pride of place. Organised around the Inter-Regional Group of MPs, they have now created a Democratic Platform with widespread support both within and outside the party. Their programme has an essentially social democratic thrust.

They want to reintroduce democratic rights within the party and in society at large. They want to "return

to the freedom of factions" and to "replace the *nomenklatura* system" by which all key posts are staffed by central appointees. In denouncing corruption and bureaucracy key figures in their ranks—most obviously Stankevich and Yeltsin—have chalked up thumping majorities in recent local and republican elections. The "Democratic Russia" bloc which they support has now taken control of the Moscow and Leningrad city councils.

### License

However, the leading figures of the Democratic Platform are ever more impatient to introduce market mechanisms which will increase unemployment, lower the living standards of millions and immediately license the development of rich "co-operators" and small capitalists. Gavril Popov—its leading Moscow council representative—is an outspoken convert to the free market. So too is Boris Yeltsin. Yuri Afanasyev had publicly denounced Lenin as the "architect of seventy years of terror". He has left the party and is set on creating a new social democratic party.

The most visible force standing against the Democratic Platform in the recent elections was the Bloc of Russian Public-Patriotic Movements.

The "Patriots" have recently convened their own conference in order to establish their inner party faction more securely.

They did extremely badly in the local elections but are capable of winning considerable support; not only within the party apparatus but also from workers as the crisis of Soviet society and economy deepens. In opposing the "uncontrolled market mechanism", free economic zones, speculation and corruption they voice the fears of millions of workers. But they want to divert those fears into a chauvinistic and profoundly authoritarian Russian separation.

Declaring "the fatherland is in danger", they want to end what they call Soviet Russia's "discreditable practice of turning over to the Union budget tens of billions of rubles that go for subsidies and the artificial elevation of the standard of living in other Union republics, something not derived from their own labour".

They are in favour of the indefinite leasing of land to peasant families and their heirs.

In order for Soviet Russia to have self-determination they want to move the capital of the USSR out of Moscow! And, they reassure the masses that Russia "has always been and will remain a world power".



Gorbachev has no answer to the Soviet economic crisis

This great Russian chauvinism, combining elements of anti-capitalist rhetoric with appeals to the Orthodox Church and the private peasant, has support in the highest ranks of the party apparatus. Gispadov and his supporters in Leningrad smile favourably on it. So too, in all probability, do Ligachev's supporters in the central state and party apparatus.

### Sharper

This obvious polarity within the party is becoming sharper and creating ever more contradictions for those who stand in between the two poles. As a result of the recent elections municipal power in the key cities and industrial areas is now in the hands of supporters of the Democratic Platform.

But the party apparatus remains in the hands of conservative elements. This is starkly the case in Leningrad where leading Democratic Platform supporter Sobchak has said: "We have a kind of dual power for the

time being. But it won't last for long."

The forthcoming CPSU congress in July is serving to sharpen these conflicts as the factions jostle for Congress delegations. In advance the Central Committee, dominated as it is by old time conservatives, has announced "it is time to put an end to unscrupulous and ideological wavering" and called for the Democratic Platform "radicals" to leave the party. Local party organisations have received a Central Committee circular urging them to expel the leaders of the Democratic Platform.

In their turn the Democratic Platform's leadership is deeply divided as to when and how to fulfil their social democratic project. Some want to stay on in the CPSU for the time being and conduct a fight at the July Congress. Others, like Afanasyev, have walked out already.

The growing polarisation and the threat of a split in the CPSU is yet another dramatic demonstration of the fact that the Soviet bureaucracy as a whole sees no way out of this crisis. ■



# the LRCI

## NEWS FROM THE SECTIONS

VOCE OPERAIA

### LRCI report on founding conference

AN OBSERVER from the LRCI attended the recent founding conference of the Voce Operaia (Workers' Voice—VO) in Perugia, Italy. The VO is composed of comrades formerly in the Gruppo Operaia Rivoluzionaria (Revolutionary Workers Group). The comrades of Voce Operaia are now organised as a "political association" within Democrazia Proletaria (DP) a right centrist organisation with four MPs in the Italian parliament and over 6,000 members.

DP itself is in political crisis. Its former leadership split away during the 1989 elections to enter a bloc with the so called "Green Rainbow" movement. The remaining comrades are deeply and evenly divided. On the right of the party is an alliance of Greens and ex-Maoist "children of '68". The left is made up of the traditional "workerists" within DP. The left has supplemented by the recent entry of the Voce Operaia comrades and the Italian section of the USFI, the Liga Comunista Rivoluzionaria (LCR). The LCR too is now a "political association" organised within DP around its magazine *Bandiera Rossa*.

No one on the Italian left gives this unstable coalition long to survive. The original DP split was not the result of a move left by the majority, but of the old leadership's lurch to the right. DP remains an organisation whose members carry out a very low level of activity, primarily electoral, although it does contain many workers and some influential trade unionists. Instead of the project of what Trotsky called "splitting the rotten beam with a sharpened axe" the USFI supporters within DP are aiming at a kind of organic unity with it. They are pursuing the same kind of strategic bloc with non-Trotskyist left reformists and centrists that they have carried out in Britain under the *Labour Briefing* and *Socialist Action* projects.

The VO comrades are much clearer about the need for party intervention into DP and do not believe that it is possible to transform DP. It remains to be seen whether there are any active revolutionary forces to be gained and whether the VO leadership, which has demonstrated its appetite for political compromises with right centrism throughout its history (see *Trotskyist International No 1* for an account of their relations with the WRP/Preparatory Committee) will be ready to make a break with the rest of the DP left at the decisive moment.

The LRCI believes that the VO is correct to enter DP, but warns that the potentially small and temporary opportunities this provides should not be allowed to get in the way of addressing the growing crisis of the Italian CP and its trade union federation. ■

### TROTSKYIST INTERNATIONAL

## New issue out now!

THE FOURTH issue of *Trotskyist International* is essential reading for every socialist trying to grapple with the events in Eastern Europe.

A major resolution from our March International Executive Committee (IEC), "The death agony of Stalinism", analyses the origins and nature of the crisis in the degenerate(d) workers' states and charts a road to working class power and the transition to socialism.

Other resolutions from the IEC and the International Secretariat (IS) of the LRCI, published alongside this, explain in detail the developments in Romania, the GDR and the intervention of Soviet troops in Azerbaijan. In addition to these programmatic statements we carry interviews with a Sotsprof militant and with Boris Kagarlitsky.

These provide a fascinating insight into the politics and developments of the emerging independent Soviet workers' movement, while a review of Kagarlitsky's book *The Dialectic of Change*, highlights the danger of turning to western social democracy as the alternative to Stalinist monolithism.

The impact of Stalinism's collapse has been felt beyond the boundary of the now demolished Berlin Wall. In particular it has sparked a series of negotiations between the Stalinist influenced ANC and the apartheid regime in South Africa. A resolution of the LRCI's IEC examines this process of negotiations and warns of the dangers of a sell out.

Last, but by no means least, we have reprinted a document, "Revolution and counter-revolution in Poland 1980-81", adopted in 1982 by three of the groups who went on to found the LRCI. With a new style Solidarnosc now in power, with the lessons of the old style Solidarnosc being looked to by workers throughout the USSR and Eastern Europe, this document is of more than historical importance. It is a vital contribution to the debate now going on in the East European and Soviet workers' movement—where to now?

All of these resolutions and articles make *Trotskyist International* an invaluable read and, more importantly, a weapon in the struggle to resolve the crisis of leadership in the world working class and to refound a Leninist-Trotskyist International. ■

**The LRCI**  
Arbeiter/Innenstandpunkt (Austria), Gruppe Arbeitermacht (Germany),  
Irish Workers Group, Poder Obrero (Peru), Pouvoir Ouvrier (France),  
Workers Power Group (Britain)

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

## CUBA

When the Nicaraguan election results came through to the US Congress leading Democrat, Robert Dole crowed; "Two down, one to go". The two were Manuel Noriega and Daniel Ortega, the one to go was of course the bogeyman of US politics—Fidel Castro. **John McKee weighs up Castro's chances of survival.**



Castro: deserted as Stalinism crumbles in Eastern Europe

## Will Castro survive?

FOLLOWING THE collapse of Stalinist governments in Eastern Europe, it is little wonder that the imperialists are casting hopeful eyes in the direction of Cuba. They gleefully point out its increasing international isolation, even within the "socialist bloc". Could Castro really follow Honecker, Ceausescu and Rakovsky into oblivion?

In 1986 the Cuban Communist Party launched its "Rectification Campaign" in response to growing problems in the economy. It was launched, in true Stalinist fashion, between sessions of the Third Party Congress, in an attempt by Castro to pre-empt sections of the party who were sympathetic to Gorbachev's policies of *glasnost* and *perestroika*. It claimed to be a campaign against waste, bureaucracy and corruption.

The problems in the economy threatened to reach crisis proportions by the mid-1980s. The price of sugar had dropped on the world market from 30 cents a pound in 1980 to 4 cents in 1985. Despite the USSR paying many times more than world prices, Cuba lost \$5 billion in revenue in the ten years to 1985. At the same time oil prices were falling. Re-exports of excess Soviet oil were always an important source of hard currency for the Cuban economy. At its peak this netted the Cuban economy \$600 million annually. In 1989 it was down to \$180 million.

Like the rest of Latin America Cuba is weighed down by debt in the 1980s. In 1969 Cuba's foreign debt to the west was a mere \$291 million. Today it has reached \$6.6 billion, and this excludes the enormous debt to the Soviet Union which is constantly renegotiated on favourable terms.

### Stagnation

These external problems were compounded, as in the Soviet Union, by a growing stagnation of the bureaucratically planned economy. Growth rates slowed in the mid-80s and went into the negative in some years. Despite the enormous gains made in health, education and welfare since the revolution, outstripping the rest of Latin America, chronic shortages continued to exist and became worse.

At the end of 1987 Castro delivered a speech to a congress of workers extolling the health virtues of eating more vegetables. He went through some twenty varieties of vegetables grown in Cuba, showing not only their nutritional qualities but describing how to cook them. Listening afterwards to the response of two workers, a journalist found them full of genuine admiration for the knowledge that Castro displayed, not only of vegetables but of cooking. "The only thing he did not tell us" said a

female lift elevator operator "was how to get the vegetables".

Little wonder that the developments in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe were followed with increasing interest within the Cuban Party. *Moscow News* sold out the moment it hit the newstands and circulated from hand to hand. At the same time Castro became increasingly critical of Gorbachev's policies, in the oblique style so beloved of the Stalinists.

As events unfolded in Eastern Europe, however, the gloves came off. Castro's 26 July 1989 speech attacked the course of events in Poland and Hungary. This was followed soon after by the banning of the Soviet publications *Sputnik* and *Moscow News*. The repression in Tiananmen Square were endorsed by the Cuban Party Paper, while Vietnam and China were singled out at the end of 1989 for their "positive" developments over the year.

In return, Moscow became increasingly impatient. *New Times*, a magazine reflecting the views of the Gorbachevites, ran a series of critical articles about the inefficiencies of the Cuban economy and their failure to adopt a form of *perestroika*. Relations have become more strained as events in Eastern Europe have had a knock on effect in Comecon. At the Comecon meeting early this year there was a growing demand to conduct trade in hard currency and at world market prices. This would have been a massive blow to Cuba. So there was an agreement to exempt Cuba, Mongolia and Vietnam as the "less developed" members.

In practice Cuba has met a growing reluctance on the part of Soviet Companies, themselves bound by profit and loss targets, to ship goods at subsidised rates. This has led to the tightening of rationing for basic goods like bread and eggs, and also to rising prices. Given that today over 80% of Cuba's trade is with Comecon, the events in the USSR and Eastern Europe could spell disaster for the country's economy.

Not surprisingly the US imperialists have greeted this situation with glee and have gone out of their way to tighten the screw on the long standing blockade of Cuba. US backed "TV Marti" has joined "Radio Marti" being beamed from Miami to Cuba. The USA has cut off the few sources of modern tech-

nology and goods available to Cuba through Panama's free trade zones.

Even more seriously, military pressure has been stepped up. At the end of January a US coastguard vessel fired on a Cuban freighter in international waters after it had refused to be boarded and searched for drugs.

The search was carried out by force. In the same week six US colonels of Cuban parentage appeared on US television and called on the Cuban armed forces to follow the example of Romania and "take the side of the Cuban people against the tyranny of the Castro brothers". The *Wall Street Journal* mused as to whether evidence from Noriega should be used to "indict" Castro for drug trafficking or as a reason for "shooting down his MIGs".

### Differences

Clearly there are differences between the revolution which brought Castro to power and the process which created the Honecker and Ceausescu regimes. There is no doubting the well of support that remains in Cuba for the aims of the revolution and its leader. Cubans recognise the bullying tactics of the "Northern colossus". They are aware of the enormous poverty, lack of education and poor health services throughout Latin America and recognise the gains that the revolution gave to the ordinary workers and peasants of Cuba.

However the Nicaraguan elections have given a salutary lesson to the Cuban Stalinists and their starry eyed fellow travellers. The Cuban masses will not put up with stagnation, food shortages, bureaucracy and declining living standards over a long period. But the Cuban Stalinists have no solution to the growing crisis in their economy apart from exhortation and austerity.

The solution lies in placing the control of the economy, the plan, and the state into the hands of the workers themselves, through the establishment of real soviets, not powerless organs of "peoples' power". Only by harnessing the enormous creativity and skills shown by the Cuban workers in their struggles could the economy be revived. To achieve this a political revolution is an urgent necessity in Cuba. ■



## SOUTH AFRICA

# Stop the sell out!

**T**HE ANC and De Klerk's Nationalists are moving closer to formal negotiations on the future of South Africa. The danger of a sell out has increased.

Both sides have been laying down their "conditions" for negotiations. At the end of April De Klerk told the white parliament that he would not agree to simple majority rule.

While the whites were willing to "share" power they would not "commit suicide" by accepting one person one vote. On the other hand Mandela has repeated the ANC demand for universal suffrage, one person one vote based on a single electoral roll.

While both the leadership of the ANC and the Nationalists clearly want to consummate a deal both have to sell it to their supporters. The current resurgence of struggles in South Africa make these negotiations fraught with difficulty.

The release of many of the detainees and the easing of restrictions on the ability to organise, despite the continued existence of the state of emergency, has led to a resurgence of the radical and mass organisations. Protests are growing in the townships; against stooge councils, high rents lack of facilities.

At Sebokeng in the Transvaal protests led to brutal police repression. At least 11 demonstrators were shot dead and many injured. In response the ANC put off planned talks in April and accused sections of the Nationalists of trying to sabotage the talks.

Some of the worst violence yet seen was launched by the "warlords" of the Inkatha movement against ANC and COSATU supporters in Natal. Over thirty people were killed in one week of attacks at the end of March. This was openly organised with the collusion of the police and South African Defence Forces who stood by, or were involved in, the house-burnings and shootings.

In the Bantustans the stooge "homeland" governments have been falling like ninepins. Strikes and protests have demanded an end to corruption and repression and re-integration into South Africa.

This so-called "black on black" violence has been seized on by the ultra-right Conservative Party opposition as proof that "going soft" on the ANC will lead to the disintegration of white South Africa. But there are pressures on the white ruling class to continue the search for a negotiated settlement with the ANC.

De Klerk remains under economic pressure. Another round of international debt is due to be rescheduled in July. Inflation is estimated at 17%. As the *Financial Times* put it:

"Anyone who is thinking of putting money into Jo'burg stocks or advising a board to re-invest, or roll over a loan should wait a while."

It is not simply short term difficulties that create the pressure on the apartheid regime. The South African bosses must convince their imperialist partners that their country is safe for capitalism in the long term.

The South African led transnationals, notably Anglo American, are anxious for social peace. Not only has apartheid become dysfunctional for them at the level of the availability of skilled labour and the restrictions on the internal market but most importantly, class struggle constantly threatens their interests.

The current turmoil in the townships has lent urgency to calls from the "progressive" white bourgeoisie for a swift end to the Group Areas Act which restricts black residency. The big capitalists are

also anxious to see youth and workers reined-in.

Strike figures were up again in 1989. The long and bloody rail dispute threatened profits in private industry. Every year of struggle in the schools and communities means another layer of militant youth will be joining the workforce.

For the big monopoly capitalists the rewards of achieving a settlement in South Africa will extend far beyond that country's borders. They have their eyes fixed on the whole of southern Africa being opened up to South African imperialism in a way that they could only dream of as long as the apartheid regime remained.

South Africa has for decades been attempting to preserve and extend

*De Klerk and Mandela are set on a course of compromise which will betray the aspirations of millions of South African blacks. Lesley Day looks at the problems they face in carrying out their plans and the rotten politics that have led the ANC towards a deal with the regime.*

its hegemony in the region. Class struggle in the republic and wars of liberation outside have hampered this. Now, the South African bourgeoisie believes, "changes in the international climate" make new alliances possible.

The global retreat by Moscow has not only undermined the support for the ANC and the liberation movements, but the bigger

imperialist powers are looking to post Stalinist Europe, rather than Africa, for future investment. De Klerk and big business think South Africa can fill the gap.

For this price of national and regional peace, it is now clear that the regime is willing to reform away most aspects of legal apartheid. It is willing to see the complete reversal of the homeland policy.

Government spokesmen acknowledge its failure and haven't lifted a finger to save their former allies, such as Ciskei's leaders ousted by a pro-ANC military coup.

But most of all, the South African capitalists need the political settlement that would let them incorporate a black leadership, allow the growth and integration of a black bourgeoisie and petit bourgeoisie and the stabilisation of a skilled black workforce.

De Klerk must preserve and safeguard white supremacy for the foreseeable future. Whatever political settlement he reaches in the talks it will contain some form of white veto. His ability to do this rests with the ANC leadership and their capacity to sell such a deal to the masses.



Inkatha members in Natal—responsible for many of the recent killings

**S**INCE THE release of Mandela and the other ANC leaders and the unbanning of black political organisations, the ANC leadership has set out to reconstruct a properly functioning political party inside South Africa. The ANC leadership is struggling to enforce its control and authority over the entire mass movement.

Only by doing this can it come out of negotiations with a hope of selling the masses short. The ANC needs to tread a very delicate path to pursue its goals in a situation of rising struggles, which constantly threaten to get out of its control.

On the one side the ANC has to keep up the pressure on the apartheid regime by calling on its supporters to keep up the struggle in the townships and unions and refusing to openly abandon the armed struggle. On the other it needs to channel these movements into organs and structures which can be "switched off and on" depending on progress in negotiations.

The past months have demonstrated just how difficult this manoeuvre might become. Reports suggest that the planned 11 April talks with De Klerk were only shelved after ANC security reported that the mass movement would be outraged at such talks coming directly after the Sebokeng slaughter.

Likewise Mandela's call to the Natal youth to "throw their arms into the sea" in a situation where the communities were in desperate need of weapons to hold off the Inkatha gangs led to widespread disgust. There were reports of Mandela T-shirts being burnt and the proposed peace talks between Mandela and the Inkatha leader

Buthelezi had to be hurriedly called off.

To avoid the repetition of such events the ANC is rapidly trying to develop its national and regional structures to establish a proper chain of command down into the mass movement and townships. The recent South African Youth Congress (SAYCO) agreed to abandon its federated structure, in which regional youth congresses had considerable autonomy, and move to a unitary structure as a preliminary to becoming an arm of the ANC, its "Youth League".

The trade union COSATU leadership, now dominated by the ANC, has been in the forefront of warning that high levels of militancy could lead to "directionless ungovernability". The South African Communist Party (SACP), always willing to provide left cover for a rightward moving leadership, has launched the slogan "From ungovernability to peoples' power". Organs of "peoples' power"—no doubt on the Cuban model where they have no power but act as the conduit for the Stalinists' instructions—are just what the ANC needs right now.

The ANC has expanded its popular front for negotiations to include even some right wing stooges of apartheid. Since the revolt and military coup in the Ciskei, which brought to power an army regime openly sympathetic to the ANC, the Mass Democratic Movement has been told not to push for the immediate destruction of these homelands and their re-integration into

South Africa.

This tolerance has even been extended to figures like Hudson Ntsanwisi "chief minister" of Gazankula, who was forced into hiding by an outbreak of unrest after Mandela's release. Recently he was one of the four "homeland" leaders who failed to turn up to discussions with De Klerk, on advice from the ANC.

ANC spokesman Thabo Mbeki recently outlined their strategy declaring after the Ciskei revolt:

"We can have a majority of the homeland seats at the negotiating table with De Klerk."

Instead of helping to mobilise and lead the masses in destroying these hated symbols of apartheid the ANC props them up and sows illusions that they are allies of the mass movement.

The kind of political settlement sought by the ANC will be a betrayal of the majority. Differentiation within the black community will speed up. Blacks with bigger farms and black small businesses will prosper. The layer of black petit bourgeois will expand, especially into public administration.

It is not surprising that some of the homeland administrators along with the traditional leaders who collaborated with the apartheid regime, have been quick to see the way the wind is blowing and are joining the ANC's coalition. While Mandela and his fellow leaders preach discipline and restraint to the youth they are welcoming these latecomers to the feast.

## The strategy of the ANC

In all this the SACP has been the willing ally and servant of the ANC. It is using its influence in the workers' movement to tie them to a popular front which will continue the system of capitalism and exploitation. In a recent interview Joe Slovo emphasised that the alliance between the SACP and the ANC was "firmer than ever".

He pointed out that even the De Klerk regime recognised that:

"There is very little difference—in relation to both immediate aims and immediate post-apartheid objectives—between the ANC and the party."

That was why they legalised it. Just as the "Constitutional Guidelines" made more explicit the ANC's commitment to a mixed capitalist economy so now the SACP is proudly proclaiming that it is "safe" to deal with.

The key question facing South African workers at the moment is how to prevent the negotiations leading to a sell out, because clearly they can be nothing else under the present leadership and programme.

Both the ANC on occasion and the SACP have raised the slogan of the constituent assembly. But of course they make no effort to link this fundamental democratic demand with the existing struggles of the masses.

The reason is that a serious struggle to convene such a body and the fight for it to satisfy the burning needs of the masses would immediately focus the struggle on the revolutionary destruction of the apartheid system. It would shatter any chances of a negotiated compromise with the white capitalist regime. ■



**E**VEN BEFORE the fighting in Trafalgar Square was over, mainstream Labour politicians were queuing up to denounce the demonstrators who fought back against the police who attacked them.

What will have surprised many, however, is the response of the *Militant* newspaper and its supporters. As the police laid into demonstrators and bystanders alike the *Militant* leadership of the Anti-Poll Tax Federation abandoned them to their fate. They lined up behind the Labour leaders to attack those who had fought back.

On the day of the demonstration Anti-Poll Tax Federation officers, mainly *Militant* supporters, actually collaborated with the police in attempts to divide the demonstration, though many were in turn assaulted by the police for their efforts. It is legitimate for the organisers of any workers' demonstration to make the contacts and arrangements with the police required by law. But the Federation clearly went beyond this.

### Procedures

Tommy Sheridan, chair of the Federation and leading *Militant* supporter, told the *Guardian* how the police had failed to follow procedures agreed with the Federation on what to do if trouble broke out. Sheridan explained the existence of a "contingency plan" to divert sections of the march away from anarchists who had staged a sit down at Downing Street and were the targets of ferocious police attack.

Police diverted the march off Whitehall onto the Embankment, leaving the Downing Street protesters isolated. The Police then attacked the sit-down and drove the ensuing violence up Whitehall into Trafalgar Square where many of the 200,000 were listening to the speakers. The stewards fully collaborated with the isolation of the sit-down with transparent lies about Trafalgar Square being "full".

When a sizeable number of working class youth correctly

*The massive anti-Poll Tax demonstration in London on 31 March was viciously attacked by the police. That fact alone should have led all class-conscious workers, let alone socialist organisations, to take a clear stand for the*

joined the fight to defend the demo the *Militant* stewards told demonstrators to disperse. When it became clear that the majority had ignored their advice these stewards failed to use their leading positions to organise a disciplined defence of the demonstration. As *Militant* supporter and Secretary of the Federation Steve Nally explained, when the police attacked, "we had no control and we pulled out all the stewards". In short they deserted in the heat of the battle.

Compounding this desertion, leading *Militant* supporters in the Federation initially joined in the media smears against the demonstrators who had tried to defend the march. Tommy Sheridan slandered the many thousands who refused to be driven away by baton charges, saying "the majority of those who became embroiled in running battles had nothing to do with our protest".

Worse still he offered to collaborate with the state in identifying and fitting up those who resisted the police offensive.

"If any of those who climbed the scaffolding in Trafalgar Square and threw blocks of concrete, metal and fire extinguishers into the crowd are identified, we will have no qualms about informing the police." (Sheridan, quoted in the *Financial Times*, 2 April)

Steve Nally, although later claiming that he meant an internal Federation inquiry, on the day after the battle called for a public inquiry—that is, an investigation by unelected Tory judges and police. Nally told ITN News that "names would be named".

*Militant* is now backtracking. Its supporters claim they have been misquoted and that they are the victims of a sectarian smear campaign. In the issue of *Militant* immediately after the demonstra-

*defence of the demonstration by any means necessary. But the supporters of Militant did the opposite. Richard Brenner looks at the role of Militant during and after the battle of Trafalgar Square.*



John Harris

# Militant runs for cover

tion they came forward with their own version of events, characterising the battle as "unprovoked attacks on the police and looting" by anarchists and "fringe groups on the outskirts of the labour movement"—by which they have always meant in the past the Socialist Workers Party and other left groups.

This is no more than a cowardly attempt to re-write history.

Of course the police used the pretext of adventurist missile throwing by a section of youth on the demo to launch their violent assault. Undoubtedly the police

victory in smashing the demo was followed by a night of sporadic looting and destruction of property by a tiny section of those who had defended Trafalgar Square and by others who had nothing to do with the demonstration. Revolutionary Marxists do not advocate or support these tactics, although we understand the frustration and alienation which leads young workers to adopt them.

The adoption of such tactics by youth, some lumpenised by ten years of Tory attacks on jobs and social welfare, reflects a failure of the left to win the battle for leadership and direct this anger in an organised way against the Tories and the bosses. Despite this, it is obligatory for Marxists to defend these youth against the police and courts.

*Militant* supporters say Trotsky described violence as a plague. What they forget to add is that Trotsky was a tireless propagandist against pacifism and reformism; that he always argued that violence would be an essential tool if the working class were ever to defeat the bosses' repressive state forces and take political power. Trotsky advocated mass violence, through a workers' militia. While he argued against individual terrorism, he always defended the terrorists from state repression.

### Denunciation

However it is viewed, *Militant's* denunciation of the fighters and its refusal to endorse the physical defence of the demonstration, indeed its blaming of the violence on groups of demonstrators, is a million miles from Trotsky's method.

*Militant's* rejection of violence on the demonstration flows from its perspective for the class struggle as a whole. It holds out the illusion that:

"A peaceful socialist transformation of society is entirely possible if the colossal potential power of the working class is mobilised in action to change society." (*Militant*, 6 April)

Its supporters base their central

### WHO WAS TO BLAME?

- "Vermin"  
—Barry Sheerman, Labour Home Affairs Spokesperson
- "Lunatics, anarchists and other extremists"  
—George Galloway, Scottish Labour MP
- "Mindless hooligans"  
—Roy Hattersley
- "Mindless idiots"  
—Tommy Sheridan, *Militant* supporter

strategy on this perspective: that Labour could come to power on a socialist programme and proceed to legislate capitalism out of existence.

There is not a single example in history of the capitalists responding to such an attempt with anything but vicious repression. Because genuine Marxists recognise the inevitability of this response we seek to prepare the workers' movement to deal with it even during the ordinary day-to-day struggles of the class. That is why we argue for turning the APTF's into councils of action, for workers' defence squads against the bailiffs, for general strike action against the tax, and for proper marshalling and self defence of workers' demonstrations.

Trotsky's programme included demands like these; not just for a revolutionary situation but as the method of transforming the defensive struggles of workers into the struggle for power.

*Militant* supporters have attempted to mask their pacifist perspective with Marxist phrasemongering. This is a typical feature of centrism, combining revolutionary words with reformist actions. Their zig-zagging under the pressure of the class struggle is only a taste of how they would react if they achieved mass influence in the working class.

Honest working-class fighters should break from the programme and practice of *Militant*. Like the thousands of ordinary working class youth slandered as "anarchist jobs" and "nihilists" in the pages of *Militant* they should reject *Militant's* reformist pacifism. They must turn to the unfalsified programme of Marxism, to Workers Power. ■

## "WORKERS' INTERNATIONAL"

# Budapest conference fraud

THE "PREPARATORY Committee for the Reconstruction of the Fourth International" has accomplished its aims and thus dissolved itself. At a conference held in Budapest on the 14-15 April it founded its own "International". Its work was completed in the same fraudulent and underhand way that has marked the "International Conference" project since its inception in 1986.

The conference was announced as a discussion of the problems posed to the working class east and west, no mention being made of its plans to launch a new International. The LRCI asked if we could be represented by our Austrian section.

This was on the basis of a clear statement in the March issue of *Tasks of the Fourth International* (Journal of the Preparatory Committee), that while the conference was called by those "fighting for the continuity of the Fourth International" it was "not restricted to those who agree with us on this issue".

However it soon became clear that this "openness" did not apply to the genuine Trotskyists of the LRCI. A letter swiftly came back from Geoff Pilling, Secretary of the Committee, refusing to allow us to participate and declaring:

"In general, this is not a conference to which we have invited organisations as such: we do not plan for a discussion, on this occasion at least, among those claiming to be

Trotskyist."

The British Workers Revolutionary Party (WRP) were clearly thrown into a panic by the thought of the LRCI participating. So much so that one of the observing groups, the RKL of Austria, was sworn to secrecy about the venue of the conference in order that we could not attend!

The unprincipled nature of this exclusion is revealed by looking at who the WRP were prepared to invite. One organisation that was asked to participate, for example, was the League for a Revolutionary Party from New York, an organisation which considers the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, China, Cuba, etc. to be state capitalist. Obviously the Preparatory Committee preferred state capitalist groups and even groups that claimed no allegiance to Trotskyism at all, like one of the Hungarian groups present, to the Trotskyists of the LRCI.

The reason for their LRCI-phobia is clear. Since their first moves towards an "open" international conference we have argued for a truly democratic forum which focused debate upon the key programmatic issues facing the working class. We argued that a new International could only be built through recognising the errors that led to the degeneration of the Fourth International (FI), including a recognition of the part played by the WRP's own rotten tradition in the

International Committee, and agreeing a common programme for the world working class.

But the Preparatory Committee refused to adopt such a course and instead looked to build a new "International" without learning the lessons of the past or preparing for the struggles of the future.

The Budapest Conference was reported in *Workers Press* (21 April). Emblazoned across the front page was the news "New Workers' International Formed". What did not appear was either the organisations attending, nor even what organisations had founded this new "International"!

Instead of a programme, they could only agree an "outline". The only documents passed were an organisational one establishing a democratic centralist leadership and a Political Report by Balsz Nagy.

More bizarre still, it turns out to be an International to refound an International! "The Workers' International to Refound the Fourth International". All this reflects the hopeless centrism and down right political dishonesty that one would expect from a leadership which stuck with and supported Healy through the most degenerate years of the International Committee.

We predict the record of the new "Workers' International" will be no better, and further that its life span before split and fragmentation will be a lot shorter. ■



# Progressive laws

Dear comrades,  
Duleep of the Anarchist Workers Group (Letters WP 129) is right to oppose the Embryo Bill but wrong to be against all protective legislation. He rejects the idea that the capitalist state can ever play a progressive role and argues that workers should use their "collective power" to defend themselves instead of demanding state intervention.

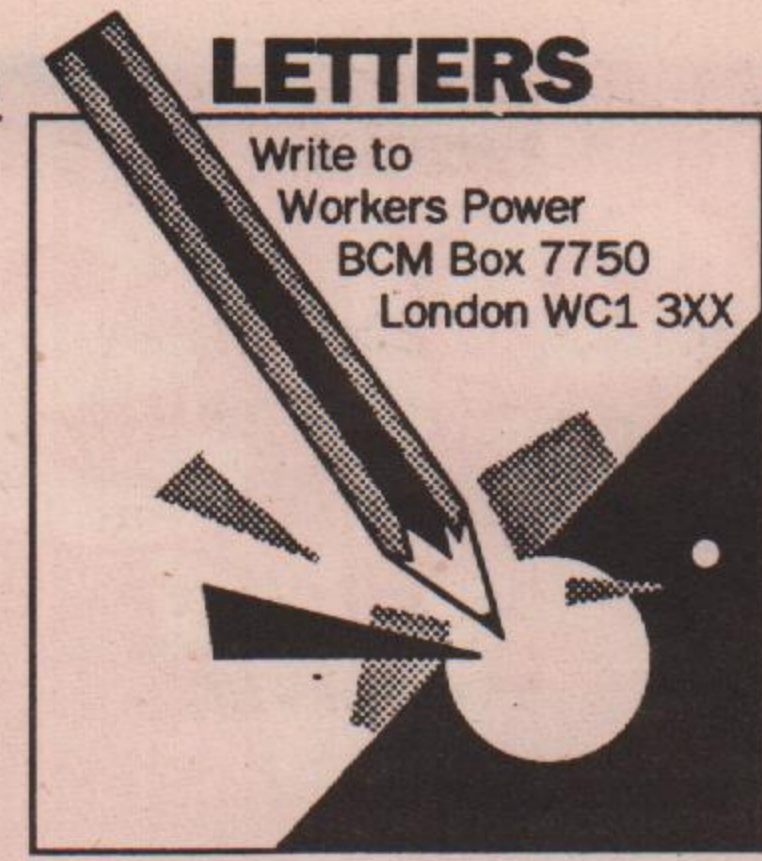
While the capitalist state will always defend the bosses' profit system with ruthless brutality when under threat, that same state can also concede reforms which benefit sections of workers or the class as a whole. The history of nineteenth century protective legislation illustrates the point.

By the 1830s the working class, in some urban and industrial areas, literally could not reproduce itself. This led to mounting demands for Parliament to intervene and curb the murderous exploitation of women and children. Through mass demonstrations and strikes the working class brought its collective strength to bear and forced the introduction of various pieces of legislation, cutting hours at work, imposing restrictions on child labour and introducing maternity leave.

Obviously the enforcement of such laws required working class muscle and, even then, its effects were often contradictory. But there is no doubt that protective legislation saved many lives and shielded workers from some of the worst contem-

porary working conditions. All laws under capitalism will be "bourgeois". But they can also represent concessions wrung from the bourgeoisie. Where there are no laws on the statute book the judges can make them up.

That's why the working class can and should use its collective strength to fight for some legislation and state intervention. If we want "Free Abortion on Demand" for example, the best way of getting it is not simply to wipe out all legal restrictions on abortion but to embody the right in law and make the NHS legally required to provide the necessary facilities. The same goes for protecting donors of embryos from commer-



cial exploitation. As for the Race and Sex Discrimination Acts not eradicating racism and women's oppression I totally agree. The Factory Acts don't eradicate capitalist exploitation either. But I would rather see the 18 hour day remain illegal than leave it up to the judges and "market forces" to stop it coming back!  
Colin Lloyd  
Fulham

# Safety sham

Dear comrades,  
I couldn't agree more with your article on the current British Rail pay offer.

I'm an assistant technician in the Signals and Telecommunications (S&T) department of the London Midland Region where, since the Clapham accident, management have gone into overdrive—not to ensure that such a disaster is never repeated, but to ensure that when it does, they won't get the blame.

Under the guise of their new slogan "Safety, quality, teamwork", workers in the S&T department have been subjected to a whole barrage of management propaganda, aimed at squeezing even more work out of us for the pittance they pay us. Workers in my depot are already working sixty to seventy hours a week, with weekend and nightshifts the norm.

Contrary to what some supervisors think, we don't virtually live on the railways because we all wet our Y-fronts at the sight of a Class 91 loco. With soaring mortgages, electricity and gas bills—not forgetting the Poll Tax and inflation set to hit 10% by the autumn—many of us have no choice.

This new concern for safety by management is a complete sham.

And, it has to be said, the way the NUR leadership are going about "defending our interests" in the light of these attacks by management is also getting us nowhere. 10.2% is just not good enough and if the NUR executive won't fight, we must do it ourselves—through self-organisation of the rank and file across all the rail unions. With the Tories in disarray and the Labour leadership bending over backwards trying not to make life too difficult for them, as I see it, the only way to radically improve our conditions and have a decent public railway is to go for a cross-union all out indefinite national strike.

Yours in solidarity  
A West Midlands rail worker

# Better late than never . . .

Dear Comrades,  
Following the police riot in Trafalgar Square and Whitehall on 31 March the Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP) seem to have re-found the anti-Poll Tax movement. Previously they had dismissed the struggle against this anti-working class tax as being conducted by "shopkeepers and disaffected Tories", ignoring one million non-payers in Scotland.

The week before the demo, a protest march was organised in Leicester. RCP supporters turned up to sell copies of *Living Marxism* after making no effort to build for the demo or involve themselves in the various anti-Poll Tax unions (APTUs) in Leicester. The demonstration attracted over 1,000, the largest in Leicester for many years, and the secretary of Leicester Against the Poll Tax was well received when he called for strike action to defeat the Poll Tax.

So what did the RCP make of this? They cynically mocked the demo, asking members of Highfields APTU whether this was supposed to be a "mass workers movement". One member of the RCP said we might as well ask people not pay their phone bill as to not pay the Poll Tax.

This was in line with their proud admission two weeks earlier that "the RCP has not been at the forefront of the recent campaign against the Poll Tax" because it has a "limited potential for politicising those who became involved". (*The Next*

*Step [TNS] 16 March*)  
But what do we see in the publications of the RCP following the 31 March demo?

Suddenly the Poll Tax is front page news for the RCP. Instead of snide comments about the APTUs their paper is full of advice on how to fight the tax and the police clampdown. It is full of criticisms of the left for failing to organise the resistance. A good point, but coming from the RCP, who did nothing to build the anti-Poll Tax movement, it is a bit rich.

In the thick of the demonstration RCP leader Mike Freeman apparently "noticed a sharp divergence". The youth were angry but "many were deeply cynical about politics in general, left wing just as much as right wing". (*TNS 6 April*)

They are wrong of course, but who can blame them when self-styled "revolutionary communists" are able to change their line 180 degrees without so much as a word of self-criticism?

Despite "discovering" the Poll Tax struggle the RCP offers no strategy to defeat it. They have taken up no consistent fight in the Labour movement or the Anti-Poll Tax Federation. Workers should beware of the RCP. They will drop the anti-Poll Tax movement as quickly as they re-found it after 31 March as soon as something more interesting and "political" comes along.

Yours with communist greetings  
Ian Dakin, Vice Chair, Leicester APTF (personal capacity)

# UNREALISTIC?

Dear Comrades,  
Whilst I agree wholeheartedly with most of your coverage of the *Mirror* witch-hunt against Arthur Scargill, I think you are being a little unrealistic in your condemnation of Paul Foot. To criticise him for speaking on platforms as a *Mirror*—rather than a *Socialist Worker*—journalist is fair enough. But to suggest that he must, in effect, deliberately seek the sack by attacking Robert Maxwell in one of his own papers—rather than via the *Mirror* NUJ chapel—seems a bit ultra-left to me.

An NUJ member

# workers power

**Cardiff**  
Marxist Discussion Group  
*Marxists and the Labour Party*  
Monday 4 May 7-30  
The Gower Hotel, Cathays

**Chesterfield**  
Public Meeting  
*Tories on the run?*  
Thursday 10 May 7-30  
Room 1, Market Hall

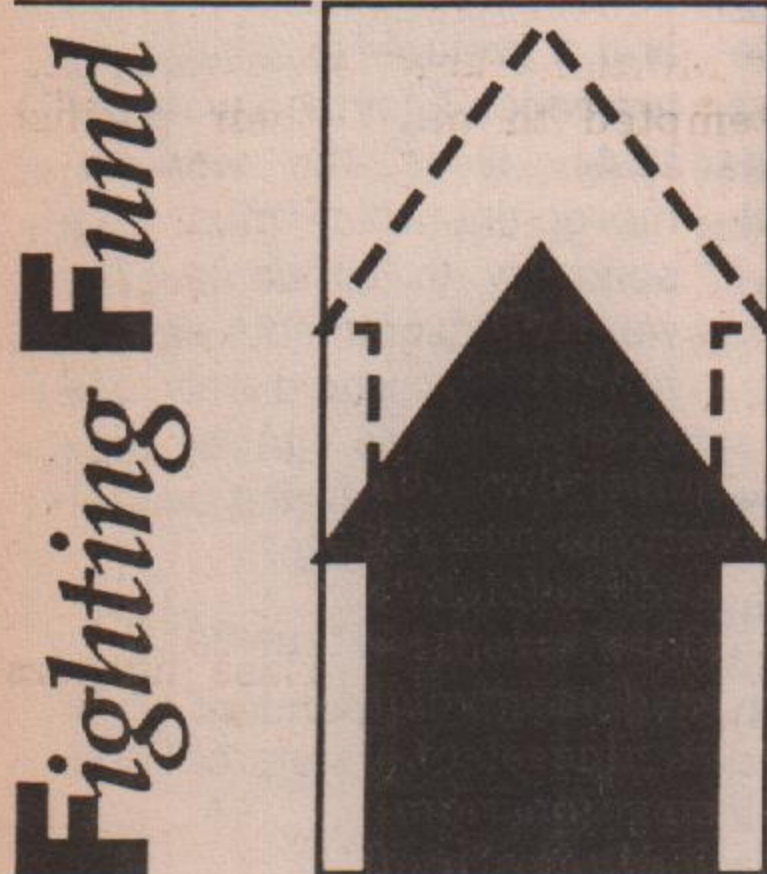
# Meetings this month

**South London**  
Public Meeting  
*Why is Thatcher afraid of Europe?*  
Wednesday 30 May 7-30  
Clapham Baths, Clapham Manor St SW4, near Clapham Common tube

**North East London**  
Public Meeting  
*How to fight racism and fascism*  
Thursday 24 May 7-30  
The Approach Tavern, Approach Road, nr Bethnal Green tube

**Sheffield**  
Public Meeting  
*Tories on the run?*  
Friday 11 May 7-30  
SCCAU, West St

**Manchester**  
Public Meeting  
*James Connolly's Marxism*  
Thursday 24 May 7-30  
Manchester Town Hall



**£18,386**  
Thanks this month go to South London readers (£200), Cardiff branch (£82-40), and a North London supporter (£100) bringing our Premises Fund up to £18,386-40

**Campaign for Solidarity with Workers in the Eastern Bloc**

**Picket of the Soviet Consulate in protest at the blockade of Lithuania**  
Opposite the Soviet Consulate  
Corner of Kensington Palace Gardens and Bayswater Road  
6-7-00 Wednesday 16 May

**Eastern Europe Fund**  
Our Eastern Europe fighting fund received a welcome boost with £50 from South London supporters, £20 from Sheffield and £14-40 from a Cardiff reader

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<input type="checkbox"/> Trotskyist International	£6 for 3 issues
<input type="checkbox"/> Trotskyist International	£3 for 3 issues

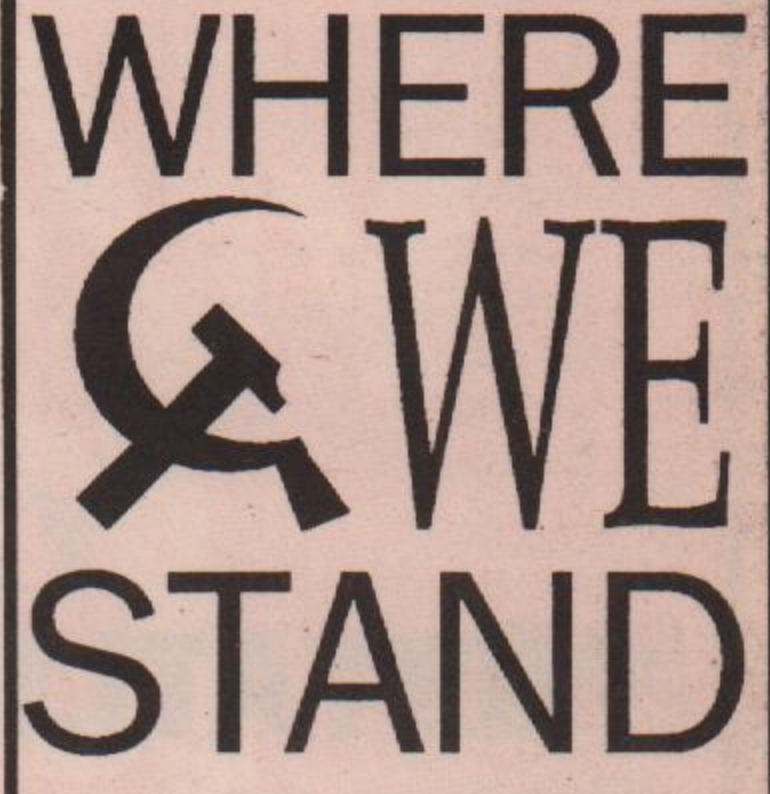
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WORKERS POWER is a revolutionary communist organisation. We base our programme and policies on the works of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky, on the documents of the first four congresses of the Third (Communist) International and on the Transitional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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We support the struggles of oppressed nationalities or countries against imperialism. We unconditionally support the Irish Republicans fighting to drive British troops out of Ireland. We politically oppose the nationalists (bourgeois and petit bourgeois) who lead the struggles of the oppressed nations. To their strategy we counterpose the strategy of permanent revolution, that is the leadership of the anti-imperialist struggle by the working class with a programme of socialist revolution and internationalism.

In conflicts between imperialist countries and semi-colonial countries, we are for the defeat of "our own" army and the victory of the country oppressed and exploited by imperialism. We are for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of British troops from Ireland. We fight imperialist war not with pacifist pleas but with militant class struggle methods including the forcible disarmament of "our own" bosses.

Workers Power is the British Section of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International. The last revolutionary International (Fourth) collapsed in the years 1948-51.

The LRCI is pledged to fight the centrism of the degenerate fragments of the Fourth International and to refound a Leninist Trotskyist International and build a new world party of socialist revolution. We combine the struggle for a re-elaborated transitional programme with active involvement in the struggles of the working class—fighting for revolutionary leadership.

If you are a class conscious fighter against capitalism; if you are an internationalist—join us!



# Workers power

British section of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International

## INSIDE

- Labour Party: policies for the bosses
- South Africa: stop the sell out
- Prisons in crisis

# HANDS OFF LITHUANIA

FOR AN INDEPENDENT WORKERS' LITHUANIA

**GORBACHEV'S HANDS** are firmly round Lithuania's throat. He hopes to force the Lithuanian government into submission without completely choking the life out of the republic.

He is willing to negotiate secession over a five year period, and in the meantime demonstrate to the other republics, to the hard-liners in the bureaucracy and to western governments that he is still in control.

The economic blockade of Lithuania was begun in mid-April after its newly elected government had refused to give in to the diplomatic and muted military threats from Moscow and retract their declaration of independence.

First oil and gas were cut off, followed by certain food-stuffs and raw material supplies to the factories. A blockade of all rail supplies has been ordered but has yet to take full effect. Estonia has refused to implement the action and has made a statement defying Moscow.

Nevertheless, Moscow's sanctions have already had serious effects in Lithuania with fuel, soap and sugar rationing, threats of food rationing from the start of May, hospitals dealing with emergencies only and 10% of enterprises preparing to close. An estimated 35,000 workers will be unemployed by early May according to Lithuanian deputy prime minister Brazauskas.

### Stability

What support has the Republic of Lithuania received in its struggle against the Soviet Union? The answer from the USA was expressed by one of Bush's aides when asked whether he would cancel the forthcoming summit with Gorbachev in protest:

"We're talking somewhere above deeply concerned but well below cancelling the summit . . . We're talking relatively small potatoes."

Whilst Bush continues to declare his support for the right of republics like Lithuania to be independent, he

places the stability of relations with Gorbachev much higher on his priority list. Developing trade links with the USSR and the rest of Eastern Europe, arms reductions and negotiated agreements are valuable diplomatic prizes for Bush. Asked what it would take for the US president to cancel the summit, a White House strategist explained:

"Gorbachev understands fully where we draw the line. It's tanks-people-blood and another Tiananmen Square. As long as he avoids killing people, the relationship will tense up, but will probably stay on track."

The EC Foreign Ministers' meeting in Dublin took much the same stance—condemning the Moscow blockade but calling for restraint on both sides. Unlike Bush they hinted that some sanctions may be taken against Moscow in the future, such as withdrawing co-operation on technology and halting favourable trade concessions, even possibly providing some emergency aid to Lithuania. But the thrust of their intervention is to urge talks.

Only the French and West Germans have come out with a stronger statement. But not of support for Lithuania. They have called on Lithuania to suspend its declaration of independence for the time being. Kohl told the Lithuanians:

"This is not the time for additional tensions, there must be discussions. We must use all means at our disposal to stabilise East Europe."

Clearly the rights of the Lithuanians are to be subordinated to the broader plans the imperialists have for negotiations with Gorbachev and the smooth restoration of capitalism in Eastern Europe.



Soviet troops move into Vilnius Party headquarters

These "democrats" of the west have offered no material aid to Lithuania. Oil supplies have been refused. The only support Lithuania is getting in its struggle to break the blockade so far has been from the workers of the USSR and the other republics.

In addition to Estonia's refusal to carry out the rail blockade, enterprises in other republics have agreed to continue supplies in defiance of Moscow. This represents workers' solidarity combined with economic necessity—the Tyumen oil workers have offered to exchange oil for food, and some factories in the Ukraine and Moldavia want to continue trade.

But this will not be enough to defeat the steady strangulation which Gorbachev is attempting. The Lithuanian government has already shown that it is willing to make major concessions, mainly on the laws it has introduced since independence concerning citizenship, army service and CPSU property. It may even concede

and "suspend" the independence declaration under the combined pressure of Moscow and the west.

The Lithuanian people face enormous opposition in their struggle for independence. This has great dangers for the working class. The Moscow blockade has pushed them towards a stronger alliance with the government which is led by reactionary and pro-capitalist forces.

President Landsbergis has shown that behind all the bluster and apparent hardness of his stance he is willing to negotiate some settlement which will leave Lithuania in a dependent relationship with the USSR. His programme is for the restoration of capitalism and the market, either within some kind of federated relationship to the USSR, or as a subordinate state within Western Europe.

Landsbergis is no friend of the Lithuanian workers—he will neither achieve real independence nor solve their economic problems. The shortages, the unemploy-

ment and the growth of a black market which Lithuania is currently facing due to the economic blockade are a taste of what is to come if marketisation is allowed to proceed.

The only true ally of the Lithuanian people in their struggle for independence is the international working class. Solidarity is vital to show that the workers' movement will both defend the right of this nation to leave the USSR and support the workers in their fight against reactionary attempts to restore capitalism in the Baltic states.

### Solidarity

Workers in the USSR have already begun to show their solidarity. Workers in Britain must do the same. We must pass resolutions of support, demanding that the TUC and the Labour Party declare their support for the independence of Lithuania. We should demand that the British government recognises Lithuania and supplies goods requested by Lithuania without

conditions. Workers throughout Europe should refuse to handle goods from the USSR which were destined for Lithuania but have been re-directed.

However, we should oppose any form of sanctions, diplomatic or economic, by western governments against the USSR.

We oppose the use of force to break the blockade. This would represent an act of hostility against the USSR and a prelude to military intervention against a workers' state. It is the workers' movement which must give solidarity to Lithuania. The western governments are not allies—they would only use intervention to further their own end of restoring capitalism in the Baltics.

- Hands off Lithuania!
- For an independent workers' council state of Lithuania!
- No sanctions against the USSR!
- Build workers' solidarity with the Lithuanian people!