

Workers power

British section of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International

INSIDE

Issue 161 November 1992

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Kick the Tories while they're down!

DIVIDE AND RULE: that's the strategy the Tories have fol- lowed for thirteen years against the working class.

Now the Tories are divided. They are at each others' throats over Europe and the recession. Every week brings a new Tory climbdown or U-turn.

The Tories' weakness gives the working class an opportunity that must not be missed. We can stop them dead in their tracks—on the pits, hospital closures, local service cuts and the attack on pay they are planning.

But on one condition: we have to organise to fight **NOW!** We have to transform the labour and trade union movement into a movement for co-ordinated strike action against every aspect of the Tory fourth term offensive.

Just look at what the Tories are planning:

■ 31 pits are still under the axe. Heseltine's climb-down was a stalling tactic. Thirty

thousand miners face a life-time on the dole, along with 100,000 workers dependent on the coal industry.

■ Up to seven London hospitals are to close, as the "internal market" works its way through the NHS. With more than half our hospitals now opted-out of the NHS there will be more bed closures, ward closures and ambulance service disasters.

■ To cut public spending the Tories will attack benefits, pensions and public sector pay. John Major's new "go for growth" policy will make the bosses' bank accounts grow. But millions of health workers, teachers, council workers, firefighters, railway workers and miners face a wage cut or the dole this winter. Privatisation plans, of the rail for example, will increase the threat of sackings and pay cuts.

■ As the recession continues the jobless total will carry on climbing. Already official figures are nearing three million. The real total is nearer four million. One in ten work-

ers are now living on £42 a week plus whatever else they can scrape from the tight fisted DSS.

Millions of people all over Britain are now realising that the Tories conned their way into a fourth term of office. The anger that exploded over the pit closures was not just about 30,000 miners' jobs. It was anger at a system that destroys jobs, threatens homes, keeps millions below the poverty line and caught in debt traps—all so that champagne can flow freely once again in the financial districts of London.

But the danger is that the anger will be frittered away, channelled into an alliance with rebel Tories, or a traditional TUC led campaign of talk without action.

Scared of taking on the Tories in a real fight, the leaders of the trade unions and the Labour Party want to limit the wave of anger to a series of respectable "popular" protests.

The Tories know that they will be able to ride out such a campaign and wait for the angry mood to evaporate.

- CALL A NATIONAL MINERS' STRIKE!
- BUILD COUNCILS OF ACTION!
- FIGHT FOR A GENERAL STRIKE!



How do we fight this danger?

Every active trade unionist, every worker who talks politics, every individual who hates the Tories, has to become a leader themselves. We have to go into workplaces, canteens, pubs and say: here's the chance to beat the Tories, let's get organised to do it.

The miners have to stop waiting for a parliamentary committee or a few Tories to save the pits. They should start a campaign now for a ballot on all out national strike action and occupy pits threatened with immediate closure. Such occupations can become a focus for winning national action and rallying wide sections of workers to solidarity action.

of 1984-85. In 1984-85 the best support committees were delegate bodies fighting for action; the worst were sympathy centres where collecting bean tins became a substitute for solidarity action. Today we can't afford the luxury of letting ourselves, or our leaders, salve guilty consciences with the collecting 'tin, especially with the miners not yet on strike.

The aim of building councils of action is to ensure the kind of action is organised that is both possible and necessary to hammer Major—the general strike.

The call itself will lead to nothing unless we organise to make it happen. The best way to force the TUC to act is to organise the fight now. One thing is for sure: a general strike won't organise itself. If we build for strike action now in every section under attack we can begin to win the argument for a general strike. If the TUC or local trades councils call for days of action we should try to turn them into days of general strike action to strengthen the case for an all out general strike.

With the Tories weak and divided we must not let them off the hook. With a miners' strike, with strikes against job losses and closures wherever they are announced, with workers' action councils and a general strike we can smash the Tory plans. The Tory government would not be able to survive such a blow.

But this situation won't last for ever. The rank and file must take the initiative now: strike while the iron is hot!

Workers in the NHS, local government, schools, and every sector of industry where jobs are threatened should be bombarding their unions with the call to bring their struggles together into a united strike against the Tory attacks.

On the ground rank and file workers need to link up. Workers from every workplace need to unite in action councils, made up of elected and recallable delegates, dedicated to co-ordinating strike action against the Tories and forcing the leaders to fight.

It only needs one stewards' committee or union branch in an area to take the initiative and an action council can be started. We need these far more than any re-run of the miners' support committees

WHEN LORD Neidpath led a thousand strong demonstration against pit closures, including many leading local Tories, in the Conservative heartland of Cheltenham it was clear that Major's government was in deep trouble.

The wave of opposition, demonstrations and strikes which met the decision to sack 30,000 miners knocked the government off balance completely. Not since the massive explosion of anger around the implementation of the Poll Tax had the Tories seemed so weak. Since then the government has had to make a series of spectacular retreats and U-turns to survive.

First the rigid economic logic of the "market for coal" had to be abandoned, even if temporarily, when the Tories agreed to review the closures.

Having abandoned the keystone of Tory economic policy, membership of the Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM), on 16 September Major then had to give up on his crusade against inflation as the guiding thread of economic policy. Now "going for growth" became the order of the day.

Then Major, having signalled as late as 24 September that there would be no speedy attempt to ratify Maastricht, announced his intention to push it through the Commons before next month's Edinburgh summit, signalling yet another governmental crisis and backbench rebellion.

The reason for Major's tailspin is not hard to find. The pit closures and the resulting redundancies in whole sectors of the economy became the rallying point for discontent amongst important sections of the ruling class.

Rarely has the Tory press been so united in attacking its own government. In doing this they were only faithfully reflecting the growing despair amongst many industrial and banking capitalists.

Recession

Britain is now in its 11th quarter of recession, the longest on record since the 1930s. Since mid-1990 the economy has contracted by 4%. Real unemployment, not the government's fiddled statistics, stands at over four million, 14% of the workforce. It is rising by 8,000 a week. *The Economist* reports that every month a further 5,700 companies are going bust, twice the rate of two years ago.

Not only the small fry are involved—as the massive closure programme at British Aerospace and the collapse of Dan Air shows. September saw the biggest monthly

Rarely has a British government suffered such a deep political crisis within months of victory at a general election. "Black Wednesday" when Britain was forced out of the ERM, leaving Tory economic policy in tatters, started a crisis that continues to rock Major's government. **John McKee** looks at the prospects for the Tories solving their current mess.

Tories in crisis



Thatcher's children discover state intervention

fall in house prices since the war leaving the building industry still in deep crisis.

So 16 September was the signal for an outpouring of recriminations over the whole of the Tories' economic strategy stretching back over a decade.

In the run up to the election the bosses and the middle class half-believed the Tory propaganda about recovery just around the corner. By September the bosses were quickly coming to the bitter realisation that far from recovery, the autumn brought the threat of a further deepening of recession.

The threat of a dreaded "double dip" recession was what prompted the capitalist markets to sink Britain's membership of ERM. With Major obliged to keep interest rates high to stay in ERM they reasoned, there could be no recovery. For the first weeks after Black Wednesday Major and Lamont continued to insist that they would follow basically the same recessionary policy in or out of the ERM. But a coalition of industrialists and Tory anti-European right wingers had different ideas.

It is important to understand what separates and what divides the two elements of that coalition. Rarely has the capitalist class been

so united as over the decision to enter the ERM in 1988. British manufacturing capital alongside the bankers and financiers hailed the decision as crucial to Britain's economic growth and prosperity within Europe.

Now the same industrialists were screaming for the abandonment of the high interest rate policies that went along with ERM.

It increasingly became a common analysis that the weakness of the pound reflected the weakness of the British economy. The attempt to use the ERM as a mechanism to force British industry to be as competitive as its rivals, to attack wages and improve productivity, was failing. Indeed it was having the opposite effect.

Whole swathes of industry were being forced to the wall in an attempt to keep the pound linked to the much stronger German mark, a strength that reflected its economy. The ruling class, in the face of a dramatic recession and a failure to keep up with the Germans and the French inside the ERM, is now being forced to reassess 13 years of Thatcherite economic policy.

The Economist, a magazine that throughout the late 1980s was happy to extol the virtues of the

Thatcher "economic miracle", is now full of doubt about the real gains made. Even Nigel Lawson has gone public saying he regrets he ever coined the phrase, claiming he did it after a "good dinner" (read "kneewalking drunk").

A recent *Economist* survey of Britain bemoaned the fact that since 1975 British companies retained only 45% of their earnings for investment compared to 54% for the French and Americans and 63% for Japan. While productivity grew at a record average of 4.7% a year in the 1980s—only bettered by Japan in the leading industrial countries—Britain's productivity still remains low compared to Germany, the USA and Japan.

Shedding

Worse, the productivity gains came largely from shedding jobs and the forced closure of low productivity manufacturing concerns. In the 1980s two million jobs were shed by manufacturers—30% of their total workforce.

Lack of investment in new industries, factories and equipment meant that Britain's industrial base withered. Manufacturing accounted for 27% of British gross domestic product (GDP) in 1979. It is likely to be down to 20% by next year.

It is statistics like these that have exposed the hollowness of the Tories' claims to have cured Britain's economic ills. So we are now witness to the bizarre re-conversion of major capitalist pundits and politicians to the idea of state intervention, even state ownership of major industries, as a way of bailing out British capitalism—something they were only too happy to deride as "East German-style socialism" in the mid-1980s!

That is the meaning of the much hyped Ten Point Recovery Plan from the *Independent* and calls for state subsidies from big, formerly Thatcherite industrialists and construction giants. And it is what made John Major finally utter the word "growth" in an impromptu TV interview, signalling the quiet dumping of Thatcherism, in words if not yet deeds.

But the die-hard Thatcherites are too busy fighting Major over Europe to worry about this latest turn. The wing of the Tory party intransigently opposed to further inte-

gration into Europe has seen the chance to use the ERM crisis to try and block any further moves in this direction.

Paradoxically, the Thatcherites see a short term policy of economic growth as the best guarantee that Britain will never re-enter the ERM. That explains why it was their voices that were heard loudest when it came to calls for subsidising the pits. If they can tie Major to a policy of low interest rates, a sinking pound, putting recovery before the goal of zero inflation they can do serious damage to the economic aim behind the Maastricht Treaty: "convergence" of weak economies like Britain's with the standards set by Germany.

So Major's problems over the economy are directly linked to his problems over Maastricht. The British ruling class in its vast majority knows its economic and political future lies with the EC. Britain's trade and exports are now overwhelmingly with the EC. Some of Britain's most dynamic manufacturing areas, Japanese and US owned, continue to expand only because of its position in the EC.

Major is under enormous pressure from France and Germany to ratify Maastricht. Veiled threats of a "two-speed Europe", with Britain left in the slow lane, have had their effect. Therefore he has decided take on his rebels now despite his weakness. Threats of a general election and pressure for "unity" will no doubt see Major through on the first round of Maastricht ratification, but it remains a time bomb.

The government hopes that the drive for a unified currency and steps to political unity will fall apart because of the various special clauses needed to get every EC country to ratify Maastricht. They are winning over Tory MPs' votes on just this promise. A renewed drive by the Franco-German alliance to strengthen European integration, something absolutely necessary in the long term to compete with the Japanese and North American trade blocs, could well split the Tories again.

Can the Tories overcome their current political crisis and survive another four year term? Yes, but only if the working class lets them.

Workers have nothing to gain by backing a capitalist "growth" programme designed to make them pay for the recovery just as they paid for the recession. As Trotsky wrote in 1938, neither deflation nor deflation can serve as slogans for the working class, because they are two ends of the same stick. No matter how many discarded Labourite professors are offering themselves as baptists for born again state interventionist bosses we should not be fooled.

Consistent economic growth, full employment, infrastructure spending that meets the workers' needs cannot be delivered under modern capitalism. Only the removal of the bosses' right to own and control industry and commerce can do that.

In the fight for this working class answer to the crisis we have to make every possible use of the Tories' split on Europe and the economy. But if workers back one section of the bosses against another they put their heads in a noose. ■

GOING FOR GROWTH

LAMONT'S MANSION House speech, promising a new "partnership" with industry and ring-fenced infrastructure spending, offered nothing to the working class. The Tories intend to make the workers pay for the extra spending on building projects.

Public spending on the services workers need is not on offer. The government knows that it would stoke up inflation and at the same time place bigger obstacles to eventual re-entry into the ERM.

The recession has led to falling tax revenues and growing public expenditure on the unemployed. Public borrowing has jumped within a year from 2% of GDP to 6%. The balance of payments deficit—the balance of imports over exports—has been growing worse.

While the Tories are pinning their hopes on a resurgence of exports due to the devaluation of the pound, the fact is that all of Britain's important markets in Europe are now affected by the on-

set of recession in Europe.

Every recent economic survey has been revising downwards—not just projected European economic growth rates but world growth rates as well; the USA from 2.8% to 2.3%, Japan from 3.2% to 2.5%, Germany from 2.0% to 1.2%. Indeed the world could be on its way into a recession just as Major is "going for growth".

In Japan they have just introduced a £51 billion public spending package to try and stimulate the economy. Britain is not Japan. Britain's public spending in 1993-94 is being kept to the £244 billion demanded by Lawson before the ERM crisis. And this is already £13 billion more than they originally projected without any more extra spending on infrastructure.

So how are these new infrastructure projects going to be paid for? By reversing the massive tax hand-outs for the rich introduced by Lawson? Of course not. Plans are already in place to mount a series

of sharp attacks on public sector spending.

This means at the very least a 2% wage limit in the public sector in a period where the 18% devaluation of the pound is bound to push up inflation. Already they are talking about attacking child benefits, "tightening up" on the dole, even letting pensions lag behind inflation.

As in all previous serious economic and monetary crises it is the working class that the Tories intend to make pay for it. If the Tories can offload the current economic crisis onto the workers, onto the unemployed and the poor, then they will be greatly strengthened.

If the workers seize the opportunity, refuse to shoulder this burden and step up the struggle against a weakened and vacillating government, then the chances of driving the Tories from office are better than they have been for nearly a decade. ■

EDITORIAL

Seize the time!

MORE THAN 200,000 workers marched for the miners on 25 October. Delegations from every sector of the working class showed that, contrary to popular mythology, the workers' movement still exists. It is battered, it is smaller than it was in 1979, but millions of organised workers have the will to fight.

The question is, how to fight? What are the next steps for trade union activists, members of miners' support committees, and most importantly the miners themselves?

The biggest danger is that the cross-class alliance that was on offer from the platform on 25 October will shape, dominate and then dissipate the mass working class resistance to the bosses' offensive.

The TUC leaders presented an unlovely talent show of bishops, CBI leaders, and Liberal leaders. Only the spinelessness of the Tory rebel MPs prevented Norman Willis from parading them on the platform as well.

Every one of these figures is an enemy of the working class. Every one of them supports anti-union laws and opposes strikes. The CBI wants a pay freeze this winter. Tory rebels like Boyson and Churchill have their own, right wing Thatcherite reasons for opposing pit closures. With friends like these, who needs enemies?

Basing our strategy on a "public opinion" campaign, with leading capitalist politicians and church figures to the fore, is suicide. It is suicide for the miners and suicide for the whole working class which is faced with the chance to smash the whole Tory offensive.

The pits will not be saved, the London hospitals will not be kept open, the thousands of job losses in industry will not be reversed, the coming pay battles will not be won if we rely on such a campaign and on such false friends. In each and every case, across every sector of the working class, the way to save jobs and beat back attacks on our pay is through determined strike action.

At the first sign of strike action, even legal, peaceful strike action, all the representatives of the bosses will do a runner from the "popular campaign".

The moment we link up to take generalised strike

action, occupy pits, mount picket lines, defend those pickets against the police thugs, our ruling class "friends" will become our vicious enemies. They will not stand back and applaud our banners and brass bands. They will applaud the managers, the judges and the police as they sack us, fine us and batter us.

That is because every one of them has a material interest in preserving the profits of the bosses, along with the law and order that protects these profits.

The cross-class, all party campaign is useless because it will fall apart at the moment real action is needed. And to prevent it falling apart the Labour and trade union leaders will do their utmost to sabotage workers' action in the meantime.

Many trade unionists know this. The miners in particular know it, because they were the recipients of enough ruling class justice in 1984-85 to learn that every boss is our enemy.

Yet still many are prepared to accept the logic that the miners cannot launch the fight for strike action now.

According to Dave Douglass, Hatfield Main miner and vice chair of the South Yorks panel:

"The problem that we face is that where pits are threatened with closure, the miners feel that if they went on strike the pits would close. There is a lack of confidence in winning."

Douglass explicitly criticises Workers Power for putting strike action to the fore and argues that instead of fighting for a ballot miners have to stick with the "community campaign" for the foreseeable future:

"In one sense that is more important than a strike because we are politicising people, showing them the way the state works... This campaign might have to move on from mass campaigns of civil disobedience; the kind of campaign that forced the government to back off on the poll tax." (*Daily Worker* 31 October 1992)

These words, from an NUM militant, should serve as warning to anybody carried away by the "mood of anger" that is sweeping Britain.

But miners who reject the fight for strike action now should stop kidding themselves. Without a strike

30,000 miners and their families can "politicise themselves" all the way to the DSS office.

Other miners argue that to start the fight for strike action will "kill the campaign stone dead".

Yes, if by that we mean the patronising applause of Liberals, CBI members and the wax-jacketed toffs of Cheltenham and Mayfair.

Some who argue against a miners' strike obviously don't care about such fickle friends but are desperate to keep the TUC leaders on the miners' side.

But the moment the fight gets going rank and file workers will find themselves in conflict with the union leaders. That is not an excuse for failing to fight. It is the reason why we have to organise independent of the bureaucracy within and across different unions.

There is no substitute for the fight to force the union leaders to call the kind of action we need. Miners should demand the NUM Executive sets the date for a strike ballot. The union leaders should place all the resources of the NUM behind the fight to persuade miners to reject redundancy and vote for strike action. Workers in every industry should be organising to force the TUC to call a general strike, and organising at a rank and file level to launch that action themselves.

Workers charmed by the platform platitudes of bishops, or startled by the unexpected sight of the TUC in action have to be told: snap out of it.

Every worker is faced with a choice:

Do you want to become a living exhibit in a heritage park of Britain's industrial past, the object of sympathy and polite applause from our patronising middle class "betters"?

Or do you want to restore to life the fighting spirit that created the miners' banners and bands, that brought down governments, that changed workers from miserable, subservient wage slaves into undaunted and courageous fighters?

"Close the door on past dreariness" says the Easington Colliery banner. But Tory rule has opened the door to a long and soul destroying dreariness for mining communities and countless other workers. We have the chance to slam that door and rattle rickety British capitalism to its foundations, providing we make the right choice. ■

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workers power

Legacy of the Russian Revolution

A day of discussion and debate on the 75th anniversary of the Russian Revolution organised by Workers Power

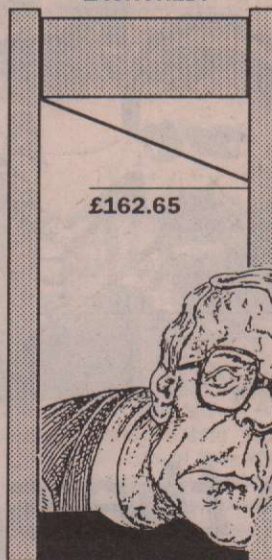
Saturday 7 November 1992

London School of Economics, Houghton Street, London WC2, Tubes Holborn, Temple Creche, food, bookstalls, evening social
Tickets £5/£1 concessions

TIMETABLE

- 11am: Registration
- 11.30am: Plenary: In defence of the Russian Revolution
- 1pm: Lunch
- 2pm: Discussion forums:
Stalinism and the National Question; Has capitalism triumphed?, Social Oppression—Stalinism versus Bolshevism
- 3.45pm: Debates:
• What was the USSR? (with Hillel Tickin)
- Has Trotskyism Failed? (with speakers from *The Leninist* and *Analysis*)
- 6.30pm: Plenary: The left and the collapse of Stalinism

£3,000 FIGHTING FUND LAUNCHED!



Workers Power has launched a £3,000 fund drive. We have produced thousands of leaflets and special issues of Workers Power, and all of this costs money. Help us meet our publication costs by giving generously. Make cheques payable to Workers Power. The more you give the nearer we will come to giving Major a taste of revolutionary justice! Let's make sure we get him before his back-benchers do! The fund kicked off to an excellent start with £162.65 raised at two London public meetings. ■

Paper sales soar!

THE EXPLOSION of anger over the pit closure programme saw Workers Power rush two special issues of our paper into print... and sales have been tremendous.

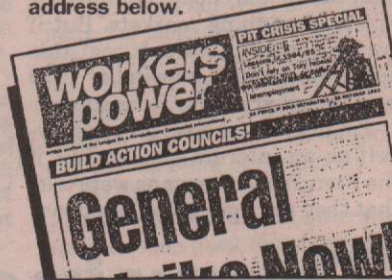
Birmingham Workers Power sold out of our first emergency edition completely, and boosted their sales figures for the month by well over 400%. Some comrades have recorded enormous sales.

One comrade in our North-East London branch sold nearly 100 papers on the October 21 demonstration and in the build up to it.

A member in South London shifted 114 copies of the special, and on the night before the demo two comrades sold 32 copies at a tube station in only an hour.

Further massive individual sales include a comrade in Sheffield who sold 76 copies, and a comrade in Birmingham who sold a total for the month of 55 papers.

If you would like to sell Workers Power, order bulk copies from the address below.



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MINERS SPEAK OUT

Trentham Colliery was one of the ten pits listed for immediate closure, now put into Heseltine's consultation process. **Bob Anderson**, Secretary of Trentham NUM, North Staffordshire, spoke to a meeting of Birmingham Trades Council miners' support group. This is an extract from his speech.

Trentham will fight!

TRENTHAM HAS mined the fastest two million tonnes in British history. Six months ago we were told we had a bright future. There are 110 million tonnes of reserves at the pit—it's not called a super pit for nothing.

They are planning to kick the people of Stoke-on-Trent in the teeth twice—once by closing Trentham, and second by opening a big open cast mine in the middle of Stoke! This open cast coal has a high sulphur content but is highly profitable, and far fewer workers are needed. Instead of fourteen hundred people digging coal you'll have sixty.

The effect of the closure on Stoke will be devastating. The Job Centre rang up the other week with the news that there are 19 full time jobs available! The other week there were just two—a petrol pump attendant and a Santa Claus. But there will be few jolly faces around this Christmas.

Cheaper

The government say gas is cheaper. But gas is a premium fuel, and the capital costs of building new power stations are huge. This fuel should be left in the ground for future generations.

What about nuclear? Well it's been estimated that if coal had the same subsidy as nuclear power then we could give it away free and give everybody in the country £10 and still make £800 million profit!

The government's arguments are totally hypocritical. They say they are free marketeers, but subsidise one form of power heavily.

Many other countries have their coal subsidised by big handouts, they dump this cheap coal with the object of winning markets. But if we stop mining British coal this could all change—remember 1973 and the oil price rise for instance.

I'm not xenophobic, I regard myself as an internationalist. But if the French and Germans were told that they were going to close down

an industry twice as efficient as British industry then they would be demonstrating too.

I'm proud to say that Trentham is putting up a lot of resistance. They wanted to get Trentham out of the way as one of the ten in the first wave of closures.

Now it is being bled to death through the blackmail tactics of BC, trying to get our lads out of the industry. They say we've got a ninety day consultation period and Heseltine has said that no-one will be disadvantaged by stopping work now. But in fact, if lads stay on until 23 January without working they will lose a lot of severance pay. With all the misinformation from BC some lads are saying they've had enough.

We persuaded a lot of our men to stop and fight. But I have to be honest comrades, there is not much time left, and—as good as mass demonstrations and meetings are—what we basically need to build for is a day of action, and that's in the first instance.

We cannot win as a force on our own: it's not just the mines now. The mines have provided a catalyst. There are 50,000 building workers ready to be thrown on the

dole. Engineers, nurses and teachers are all under threat. Yet our schools and hospitals need those workers. This government doesn't want a national health service or any public sector. If you can pay, you pay. If not, tough shit.

We have to get rid of this Tory government. The time is right for us to organise for a national day of action, a national one-day stoppage.

If there's a call, people will come out. Stoke Miners' Support Group has already called for a day of action locally and nationally.

People ask: what are the miners doing? It's been difficult after the last period of miners being down-trodden, but we've tried to transmit the confidence engendered outside into the pits.

Action

At the end of the day we have got to take action ourselves.

Our pit is bleeding to death. We have to get out to the trade union branches, out to the streets for support. We can call on the TUC but those people are on £40,000 and £50,000 a year. They don't relate to the thousands being put out of work in Stoke, Birmingham, Glasgow etc.

We have to rely on our own strength. Some people are apprehensive about breaking the law. But this government has been taken to the European court many times: it won't enforce the Sunday trading law on big businesses. We have to break out of the strait-jacket that the law put on us. We can win. Time is of the essence. We need a national one-day stoppage as quickly as possible. ■



25 October Hyde Park

The miners may be the spark ...

WP: What do you see as the next stage in the struggle to save the pits after the demonstrations in London last week?

Tyrone: With eight out of ten pits stopping production the strategy has been forced on us. If this is not to happen it is essential to have a one day general strike before Christmas to show our intent and for the unions to show their intent before the conclusion of the review.

Graham: It is going to have to come to a head. No-one seems to be taking a lead at the moment. The miners have got to take a lead because our heads are on the block.

Tyrone: The miners have no choice because by February 1993 we will be

losing 31,000 jobs. Others may not realise that the same will be happening to them. They need to support the miners and defend their own jobs.

WP: Obviously the miners suffered defeat in 1984-85 and this means a lot of miners don't want to fight alone this time. What are the chances of a "Yes" vote for a miners' strike and what needs to be

done to achieve it?

Tyrone: I would like to see workers in the rail and power stations, who will also be losing jobs, committing themselves to support the miners and committing themselves to industrial action if the miners go on strike again. If the miners are to come out we need to see the support of everyone in Britain.

WHAT WE THINK

No common "national interest"!

BY LESLEY DAY

IT COMES as no surprise that the Tory press and rebel Conservative backbenchers are using nationalist "put Britain first" arguments in their attack on Major's failing administration.

These characters, like Winston Churchill, Rhodes Boyson and Norman Tebbit, stand for the interests of the British bosses just as much as Major and Lamont. But they believe that the interests of their class will be better served by various measures giving British capital and British goods protection on the world market—whether by buying British coal, or imposing import controls or keeping out of the ERM. They long for the days when Britain was more than a second-rate European power.

Workers have no interest in following their lead. But though many workers know that the Tory nationalists are our enemy, the arguments for Britain's "national interest" still find a voice in the workers' movement.

Of course the bosses' economic case for pit closures is nonsense. It is only logical if you accept electricity privatisation and the "dash for gas" as logical.

It is blatantly obvious that Heseltine's closure plan was driven by the logic of a fixed market, not a free market, geared to make massive profits for the generating companies.

It is also blatantly obvious that German coal is heavily subsidised, giving it an advantage on the world market over unsubsidised British Coal.

Workers can and should use these facts to argue against the pit closure programme. But at the same time workers must beware of arguments that end up pitting British workers against overseas workers, in the call for import controls for example.

The real enemy isn't foreign workers and their produce, but the capitalist class who cream off the profits in every country.

As long as the capitalists are in power you can be sure that any import controls would be designed to favour their own temporary interests, not the interests of the workers.

In the modern, international, capitalist economy import controls are suicidal. They would lead to the reduction of trade and the danger of a slump, further economic rivalry, trade wars and eventually real inter-imperialist war as in 1914-18 and 1939-45.

Another version of the "all pull together" refrain is a piece of nonsense called National Recovery Day, with echoes of the "I'm Backing Britain" campaign of the Wilson

era. This time we are all supposed to go out and buy something we've been putting off thus boosting the economy.

Recessions happen because the bosses can't make a profit out of investment, not because we have all forgotten to go out and buy that food-mixer or pair of jeans we've been thinking about. The bosses know this, but in times of national crisis there is nothing they like better than to organise a collective futile gesture—like the mass pulling-up of iron railings "for ammunition" during World War Two.

More serious is the idea of "sharing the misery" in the national interest which is what Heseltine and Major will call for as they launch their so-called growth programme. Public sector workers will be asked to forego a pay rise to help the country recover.

Maybe the judges, generals and top civil servants will also take a pay freeze. For workers it means missing out essentials or defaulting on the rent or mortgage. For the rich it means one less case of Dom Perignon in the cellar this Christmas.

There is no common interest between British workers and British bosses. Our real common interest is with the workers overseas, exploited by the same banks and multinationals that run Britain.

The only way to permanently protect jobs, and provide clean, safe energy at prices workers can afford is to fight for an energy plan under workers' control.

In a workers' energy plan the long term value of gas, coal and nuclear power could be weighed against factors like short term safety, demand and production costs and the need to provide jobs for communities who depend on all these industries.

With a totally nationalised energy industry—from the pit prop manufacturers to the electricity distributors—these things could be considered with the profit motive completely out of the reckoning. Meeting workers' needs—for jobs, cheap energy and a clean environment—would be the goal of this plan.

Industries that could not make a profit would be subsidised to the full amount necessary, with the money coming from the expropriation of the banks and monopolies and heavy taxation of the rich.

But even a national energy plan could only go so far. Workers across Europe should organise together an international energy strategy to stop one pit's subsidy meaning another one's closure. ■

major intends to make his cuts to repay the money spent to prop up the pound.

WP: What do you see as the importance of today's joint union meeting at Companies' House?

Graham: Seeing the response at Companies' House—I could never have believed it! Every worker has got to stand and fight their own corner.

WP: What do you think of the resolution that was carried unanimously?

Graham: We would have trouble passing this at the colliery. We don't always agree but now everyone's back is against the wall we've got to make a stand—other workers are waiting for us.

Tyrone: The miners may be the spark that has to start a general strike but we need plenty of petrol around us so it goes with a bang. ■

LONDON HOSPITALS Smash Tomlinson!

THE HEALTH service in London is in crisis. On that we can all agree with Sir Bernard Tomlinson, author of the recent report on London's health service. Tomlinson describes the appalling state of health care in the capital:

"Many GPs have told us that they have difficulty in securing emergency admissions to inner London Hospitals... Waiting times for elective treatment in the inner London teaching hospitals are on average longer than elsewhere".

Sir Bernard's solution? Close 2,500 beds immediately, 7,000 in the medium term and sack 20,000 hospital workers!

That is no solution, it is a further massive attack on health care standards in the capital, which will mean the loss of thousands of health workers' jobs.

Crisis

At the root of the crisis is the new "internal market" in the NHS. This makes individual hospitals balance their books and allows GPs and health authorities to "shop around" for the cheapest health care.

All over the country it has meant service cuts. But in London it has produced a dramatic shortfall in the budgets of the main teaching hospitals. Care in London, like everything else in the capital, is dearer. So GPs and authorities are diverting treatment away from the central London hospitals.

Tomlinson's solution is to slash hospital beds in London. No matter that there are nearly a million people waiting for hospital treatment in the country, including 150,000 Londoners.

Rather than piecemeal cuts across the hospitals Tomlinson advocates the closure of at least four major teaching hospitals, and ten or more

smaller units.

All this is being sold to health service users and workers with the lie that it will improve health care overall.

Tomlinson argues that too much of London's resources are spent on hospital care rather than primary (GP) and community based care.

It is true that primary health care services in London are appalling. But this is due to lack of funds and the failure to plan services effectively.

Inner cities have particular health needs: more people work there and visit there than live there, people often do not register with a GP, there are tens of thousands of homeless people, refugees and great extremes of poverty. But the internal market takes no account of these special needs.

Londoners clearly need better primary care. Tomlinson argues that if these services were better, there would be less demand for hospital services.

He may be right. But until we see an increase of resources in the community and a real improvement in services, closing hospitals will only lead to London being even worse off.

And we won't see that increase, because the Tories are committed to a vicious round of public spending cuts.

Argument

Workers should start by rejecting the argument that, because primary care is bad, hospitals should close. The experience of closing big psychiatric hospitals shows what a con this argument is.

Thousands of people who lived in psychiatric hospitals were thrown out into "the community" where, it was argued, they would enjoy a better life without the horrors of living in an institution. What happened? The Tories simultaneously cut funding to



20,000 jobs will go under Tomlinson

local authorities and health services for community care. The half-way homes, community housing and community care services were unable to meet the increased demand. Thousands of former residents of institutions are now residents of the streets and doorways.

Another problem in London is that many of the beds are filled with what hospital managers call "bed blockers". These tend to be elderly people who cannot be sent home, but do not require full hospital care.

They could be sent to nursing homes. But the Tories have "reformed" these too, taking them out of the local authority sector and putting them into private, frequently cowboy, hands.

Outside London, nursing homes have sprung up all over the place providing minimal care and charging hundreds of pounds a week to old people and their families who have little choice but to pay. All over the place, except London. There property prices are too high to attract the privateers, yet local authorities have had to reduce their provision. The result is an acute shortage of nursing home places. London has less than a third of the national average of nursing home places!

London's health service, like the whole NHS, is crying out for a rational plan to meet the health needs of working class people, not an internal market.

Conference demands strike action

OVER SIXTY hospital workers met on Saturday 31 October in the first conference of rank and file trade unionists since the publication of Tomlinson.

Organised by the London Health Workers Co-ordinating Committee (HWCC), the conference brought together militants from many of the threatened hospitals, as well as those not yet in the firing line, to discuss a way forward.

There was a large measure of agreement on the need to campaign for strike action, and to overcome "special case" campaigning in individual hospitals.

The conference also backed the call for health workers to link their fight to the miners and call on the TUC for a general strike against the whole Tory onslaught.

Officers were elected to run the campaign which will continue to hold open activists' meetings on a monthly basis. The committee will produce a regular bulletin to keep health workers informed about the latest developments in the struggle against the Tomlinson closures.

The conference rejected a delegate structure proposed by Workers Power.

Delegates also voted down an amendment from Workers Power calling for concrete links to be built via delegate action councils, with the so called "revolutionaries" of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) taking the lead in scotching the idea.

Nevertheless the continued existence of the HWCC is a victory, especially since the most influential force within it—the SWP—recently argued for shutting down the committee and advising NHS workers to "build in their local hospitals" because there were no resources for a London-wide campaign.

Health workers should make sure they send regular delegations to each HWCC meeting, and utilise this cross-London body to co-ordinate the fight, against both Tomlinson and the impending pay freeze. ■

Next Meeting of HWCC

7.30pm Monday 23 November
John Astor House
Foley Street W1

For further details write to:
C Flood Secretary HWCC
c/o NUPE Office, Charing Cross
Hospital
Fulham Palace Road
London W6 8RF
081 846 1522/3

Torchlight Protest against Tomlinson

Trafalgar Square
6pm Tuesday 17 Nov
Called by London Health
Workers Co-ordinating
Committee

The irony is that Tomlinson's report is in effect an all London "plan"—for an orderly closure process to save the Tories' embarrassment as the market causes NHS chaos.

The Labour Party leaders say they welcome parts of the report. Many doctors, who have opposed cuts in the past, have also supported the plans. Why? Because they see it as a break from the power of the London teaching hospitals which they say put consultants before the care of patients.

Hospital consultants certainly have had too much control over the direction of services and resources up to now. Investment has gone on-pres-

tige projects whilst little has gone on basic patient care.

But the response should not be to take it out on patients and other staff and close these teaching hospitals!

The problem in the health service is not which sector to cut, or which professional group to give decision-making to.

Only the workers in the health service and the users of the service can decide where spending should go, how many hospitals and community centres are needed, what sort of nursing homes should be built and who should run them.

If Tomlinson is accepted 20,000 jobs will be lost. The report spends almost two pages lamenting the loss of consultant and junior doctors' jobs, but argues that they can work elsewhere. It dismisses the rest of the workforce in a short paragraph that notes:

"We would not wish to underestimate the difficulties that individuals may face during the period of transition, but we would hope that the changing face of London's health services will be seen as providing new and different opportunities."

Like the dole.

Health workers and all other workers in London must resist the plans. There are no "special cases" in this fight—we're all under attack and can only resist if we stick together. A massive campaign of strike action by health workers should be built across London demanding:

- an end to the closure programme
- the re-opening of closed wards
- a massive injection of funds to cut waiting lists and provide care to all those who need it, in hospitals and the community.

The whole internal market and opt-out system must be smashed and replaced with workers' and users' control of hospital and community health services. The drug and supply companies should be nationalised without compensation.

Tomlinson is a bosses' answer to a health crisis of the Tories' making. We must reply with a workers' answer which puts our health before their profits. ■

AT ITS recent conference, London Anti-Fascist Action (AFA) took a dangerous and sectarian decision. Supporters of Workers Power argued at the conference that the campaign should change its self-defeating attitude of boycotting events initiated by other anti-fascist and anti-racist campaigns, and should aim to build a united front to smash the fascists. This, we argued, would mean building a public campaign including public meetings, and would mean participating on ANL and ad hoc mobilisations, seeking always to win people through argument and example to the need for organised defence against the BNP and for no platform for fascists.

The majority of the Conference rejected this. A resolution from the Red Action group was passed which described participation in initiatives called by other campaigns as "leeching", and approved the boycott of the picket of David Irving on the grounds that "our involvement or participation in such events only lends them credibility and prestige". This short-sightedness now makes London AFA an obstacle to the type of united action we need.

Here we print Workers Power's statement on the outcome of the conference. We call on members of other AFA branches to reject Red Action's sectarianism and join us in the fight for a genuine united front and joint defence squads against the fascists.

LONDON AFA A fatal strategy

1. Until the London AFA Conference on 11 October, members of Workers Power have been building London AFA. We agreed with its unambiguous commitment to confronting the fascists ideologically and physically, and with the campaign's orientation to the labour movement. At all times our members argued for a united front of the left, anti-racist/anti-fascist groups and the labour movement to deny the fascists any platform and to smash their organisations.

2. But over the last period, London AFA has moved towards an increasingly sectarian strategy. It has boycotted anti-fascist activities and events organised by other campaigns. Most notably, the picket of David Irving in central London, a demonstration outside a BNP rally in York Hall, east London, and an ANL mobilisation to defend paper sellers at Brick Lane have all been ignored by AFA. Instead of fighting to win existing forces on anti-fascist mobilisations to the building of defence squads and physical confrontation, London AFA members have tended to separate or split off from larger mobilisations in order to do

the job of physical confrontation alone.

3. This is a fatal strategy. AFA is too small to do any more than "contain" the fascists in one or two areas. It can inflict momentary reverses on the BNP, but alone it cannot defeat them. In the areas where the BNP is growing and sinking roots we need a united front, organised through joint delegate committees, to co-ordinate the broadest possible working-class response, and we need to fight for anti-fascist defence squads with the closest links to the community. That way we can crush the BNP altogether.

4. At the London Conference, following the lead of the Red Action group, AFA rejected the need to win a mass membership through regular public meetings and joint actions with other existing campaigns.

5. Workers Power supports the building of a united front and joint defence squads, not a separate party-like organisation of those committed to physical force alone. This does not mean we will be adopting Red Action's twisted logic in re-

verse and boycotting AFA-initiated events. We will continue to support all genuine mobilisations and campaigns launched by AFA and other anti-fascist organisations against the fascists. We will fight for trade union support, and the support of AFA, ARA, the ANL and black community organisations for such mobilisations and campaigns. We will do so as part of our fight for a workers' united front against fascism, just as we will continue to fight within AFA against its refusal to build for or support events called by other campaigns.

6. But London AFA has set itself against this. It is now an obstacle to the construction of the united front. For this reason Workers Power members are obliged to resign all our official posts within London AFA. We will continue to participate in London AFA and Workers Power will attend London meetings to discuss joint action. However, we will no longer sell its journal and we take no responsibility for the sectarian politics of the campaign.

7. We call on any member of London AFA who wants to be in more than just a self-selected squad, and who does not want the mass political campaign against fascism to be left with the pacifists of the ANL, to join with us in the fight for delegate-based anti-fascist committees, joint defence squads and real united action against the BNP.

Workers Power, October 1992

The government's crisis, the attack on the mines and the mass opposition to unemployment have all raised the stakes in the British class struggle. **Mark Harrison and Bill Jenkins** explain how and why revolutionaries should raise the slogan of the general strike in this situation and look at the SWP's inconsistencies in their use of the slogan.

ON THE mass demonstrations against pit closures every bureaucrat on the platform took great care to avoid calling for definite action. But when the occasional rank and file worker got to the microphone, members of Trentham and Notts NUM for example, they raised the call for the general strike.

Were these workers being childish, as *Socialist Organiser* suggests? Were they guilty of demanding the impossible? Should they have joined the *Militant* and *Workers News* in calling for a one day general strike, or *Socialist Outlook* in calling for a "national strike" without specifying who should come out and when?

Great events have a tendency to catch the "revolutionary" left off guard. Still reeling from the collapse of their own various schemas, still bogged down in the quagmire of their own pessimism, these various left groupings are lagging behind the thinking of advanced working class militants.

The miners who called for a general strike perceived what was needed far more accurately than most of the British left. They recognised that a general strike was both necessary and possible. And they weren't afraid to say so. Neither are we.

The general strike is not a panacea that we raise for every struggle. It is not a mantra that we chant regardless of the objective circumstances. It is a very specific and important weapon of class struggle. The need for revolutionaries to raise it arises only at particular points in the class struggle. To understand how and when to use the slogan is vital for working class militants trying to turn today's anger into action.

Character

We raise the call for a general strike at those moments in struggle when there is a general political and economic crisis facing all workers, when the character of the bosses' attacks have a general character, when, as Trotsky said, "the class struggle rises above the particular and craft demands, and extends over all occupational and district divisions".

The Tory attack on pits assumed that generalised character. It was part of a general offensive on jobs that applies as much to miners as to shipyard workers, rail workers, power workers, public service workers, British Aerospace workers, civil servants at the DVLA in Swansea, Dan Air workers and thousands of others.

That is why thousands upon thousands of workers, across sections and across districts, rallied to the miners' demonstrations—because they recognised it was their turn next.

Moreover, every worker could see that the general question of the recession was involved in this issue. They could see that the government was badly divided and seriously weakened. Indeed, John Major himself hinted that a general election might be needed. The bosses could see the generalised problems. So should we.

We need a general strike to save the pits and throw the Tory attacks on jobs, hospitals, council services and pay right back in their smug faces.

The principal "left" arguments against the general strike slogan proceed from a supposedly "realistic" assessment of the balance of

Marxists and the General Strike

class forces:

- the TUC will not call for a general strike so it's pointless demanding they do so;
- how can we call for a general strike when even the miners are not on strike?
- the years of defeats have weakened workplace organisation and rank and file militancy and we need to rebuild these before a general strike becomes possible.

Of course the TUC leaders fear a general strike. But this is no argument for refusing to raise the demand that they call a general strike now. Millions of workers look to the lead of these bureaucrats and will respond to action they do call. The turn out for the TUC demonstration reveals this clearly.

The very fact that these leaders called the demonstration shows that they are not all powerful. They called it because they were pressured into doing so by the anger of their members. If mass anger can push the TUC leaders out onto the streets then there is every reason to believe that mass action can push them even further.

There is a danger that, in the absence of workers actually taking strike action, the general strike becomes an all or nothing slogan. Either we have a general strike or we do not strike at all, goes the argument. This is the sentiment of some miners, still worried about a repeat of 1984/85. It may also become the cynical refrain of bureaucrats who want to appear militant without having to act militant. That was certainly the rationale of Neil Greatrex, the scab UDM leader who demanded that the TUC called a general strike!

Combine

But this is not an argument against the general strike slogan. It simply means that we have to combine our agitation for the general strike with the fight for sectional action. We do not counterpose a miners' strike or rail strike to a general strike.

We say to all workers: go into battle now the better to demand solidarity action from other sections, and in struggle generalise the strike action.

As to the objection, most clearly voiced by *Socialist Organiser*, that the workers' movement is too weak for a general strike, this underestimates the potential a general strike itself has for transforming weakness into strength in the short term.

Gradualist approaches to the general strike are a departure from the revolutionary Marxist understanding of the role of struggle itself in building and rebuilding working class organisation.

The great Polish Marxist, Rosa Luxemburg, explained the fundamental mistake at the heart of such

schematism:

"The rigid mechanical-bureaucratic conception cannot conceive of the struggle save as the product of organisation at a certain stage of its strength. On the contrary the living, dialectical explanation makes the organisation arise as a product of struggle... this is precisely the specific method of growth corresponding to the proletarian class organisations: to be tested in the struggle and to go forth from the struggle with increased strength."

The potential of the general strike

goes even further than strengthening our class organisations. It places revolution on the agenda. It serves as a corridor to revolution because it raises the tempo of struggle and poses point blank the question of power in society.

Far-fetched? If you are a revolutionary in name only, yes.

If you recognise that a general strike today is both possible and necessary, then even if it begins around slogans directed at the heart of the Tories' current offensive, such a strike will challenge the rule of the capitalists.

SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY

Memory of the Class?

THE WAVE of anger that greeted the announcement of the pit closure programme led the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) to demand the TUC call a general strike.

Through petitions, lobbies, placards and resolutions the SWP, the largest organisation on the British left, have placed themselves to the fore in agitating for the general strike. Workers Power welcomes this development and we hope that joint work between our organisations can bring the practical realisation of a slogan we both agree on a step closer.

To achieve this, however, the serious weaknesses in the SWP's application of the call for a general strike need to be recognised. In the first place, the SWP have offered little in the way of a strategy to actually get a general strike. Their call doesn't go beyond a demand upon the TUC. In itself this is correct. But it is not enough.

In a major article in the SWP's theoretical journal, *International Socialism*, Tony Cliff explains that the last time the TUC called a general strike, in 1972 to free the striking dockers in Pentonville prison, it was against the background of intensive militancy and widespread rank and file action. The TUC's call was a deliberate attempt to contain and

head off this militancy.

Today we do not have such an outbreak of militant action. The mood of anger is undeniably great. But unless it is matched by action the 250,000 signatories of the SWP's petition calling for a general strike will count for nothing. Indeed, one of our own supporters found that virtually everyone in his workplace would sign the petition. But when he put a motion calling for a strike in support of the *Times* on 21 October, he couldn't get a seconder.

This shows the danger of the SWP's belief that the current mood of generalised hostility to the *miners* will be sufficient pressure to push the TUC into action. It also shows that work has to be done to build action and organisation in the workplaces that can prevent the TUC bureaucratically strangling a general strike wave.

Yet the SWP are not seriously addressing this problem. They are not consistently building for the sort of action that can get a general strike. In a resolution put by the SWP-controlled NALGO Broad Left, for example, the only demand they raise, in addition to the call on the TUC for a general strike, is for support to be given to demonstrations and protests by other sections of workers under attack. There is no

- To the Workers. - CALL TO ARMS!

THE JOINT COMMITTEE, representing the Official and Unofficial Section of the Industrial Movement, having carefully considered the reports of the Shop Stewards and representatives of the various industries, hereby resolve to

Demand a 40-Hours Maximum Working Week

for all workers, as an experiment with the object of absorbing the unemployed. If a 40-hour week fails to give the desired result, a more drastic reduction of hours will be demanded.

A GENERAL STRIKE

has been declared to take place on
Monday, 27th January,
and all workers are expected to respond.

By Order of Joint Committee
representing All Industries.

SUB-COMMITTEE:-

HUGH LYON.
J. THOM.
J. AULD.
A. HOPKINS.

J. CAMPBELL.
J. BURNS.
G. RENNIE.
W. KERR.

D. MARSHALL.
P. CAMPBELL.
J. MALONEY.
G. KERR (Councillor)
(Councillor) (Chairman).

E. SHINWELL,
S. NIMLIN,
D. S. MORTON,
WM. SHAW, } Joint-Secretaries.

All communications to be directed to Trades Council Office, 95 Bath Street, Glasgow. [SEE OVER

CIVIC PRESS, LTD. Printers.

How rank and file militants fought for a general strike in 1919.

In 1926 the TUC called a nine day general strike... in support of the miners. It did not want a revolution, and the general strike was not called in order to question the power of the capitalists. But it did, and both the capitalists and the cowardly TUC recognised this. That is why the TUC leaders called it off after nine days.

Posing the question of power does not resolve it. For that a revolution, an insurrection led by a revolutionary party, is necessary to enable the working class to seize state power. But the general strike opens the door to such a struggle. It creates the best possible conditions for building a revolutionary party and constructing the organisations of struggle the working class needs to exercise its own rule—workers' councils and a workers' militia.

This is one of the reasons why we don't call for a "General strike to kick out the Tories". It sounds very radical, but "kicking out the Tories" can mean either a general election or an armed insurrection.

If we were to call for the latter, now, we would be mad sectarians with no grip on reality.

But if all we mean is "general strike for a general election" we should say so—and we would be wrong.

The lesson of the French general strike of 1968 is that the bosses will always use elections to demobilise mass strike action. To limit the objectives of a general strike in Britain to the return of a John Smith government would be stupid: his economic policies are virtually indistinguishable from those of the Tories.

Bastion

Councils of action and picket defence squads can and must be built immediately the fight for the general strike begins. Take a pit that occupies against closure. It would be madness not to turn such an occupation into a bastion of working class power. Other sections of workers would unite with the min-

ers to ensure that no scab coal is moved, to draw other workers under threat into strike action, to ensure that supplies reached the strikers and their families. What better way to organise such activities than through a council of delegates elected from workplaces, strike committees, working class community organisations, union branches.

It would be necessary to counter the police squads with our own squads, to stop them arresting and attacking pickets, breaking into the occupation, terrorising the town.

In both cases, the council of action and the workers' defence squad, demonstrate to workers in practice the value and effectiveness, the potential power, of their own organisations.

Hit-list

The experience of 1926 proved this could happen, even in "peaceful" Britain. Across the country 54 councils of action were formed, while the TUC had 400 trades councils on its hit-list because they operated as councils of action. Workers' defence corps were formed, one numbering 700 in Fife. All of this led one bureaucrat to complain:

"Every day that the strike proceeded the control and the authority of that dispute was passing out of the hands of responsible executives."

This is the potential lodged in the general strike weapon. In the current situation of general economic and political crisis, of mass anger against the Tories, that potential can be realised if the militant minority of workers fights courageously for the realisation of the general strike demand.

Of course there is no guarantee that we will get the general strike, or that once achieved it would win. But for revolutionary workers agitation is a "dialogue with the masses". If we do not agitate for a general strike we will never know whether it is "possible". But we will have missed a golden opportunity to defeat the Tories.■

eral strike they need to unite their struggles. The best way of doing this is through councils of action: councils that bring together workers in struggle and enable them to coordinate their action. Such councils will be vital to running every aspect of a general strike if we get one. The whole history of the British General Strike in 1926 shows this clearly.

Through such councils of action we will be able to organise the working class to run society through the experience of running a general strike—organising the distribution of supplies, administering communications, etc. Alongside such councils we will build the military power of the working class through workers' defence corps to defend pickets, resist police attack etc. The general strike requires such organisations.

Yet everywhere the SWP opposes the setting up of such bodies. When Workers Power proposed such organisations, in a health workers' rank and file conference and in the Leicester labour trades council, for example, the SWP voted against us. This is not only wrong, it is in flat contradiction to what the SWP said back in January 1985.

Then, in an article in *Socialist Worker Review* an SWP leader, Chris Harman explained:

"And once the point is reached where the slogan of the general strike is correct, you have to be ready to supplement it with other slogans that begin to cope with the question of power—demands about how the strike is organised (strike committees, workers' councils), with how the strike defends itself (flying pickets, mass pickets, workers' defence guards) and with how it takes the

offensive against the state (organising within the army and the police)."

Not only are the SWP not raising these demands that Harman claims are essential, they are voting against us when we raise them.

This reinforces our view that for the SWP the general strike call is really just a piece of propaganda designed to make themselves sound militant.

After all, the SWP have a poor record of fighting for the general strike at previous points in the British class struggle in the past.

In 1972 they refused to call for a general strike around the Pentonville dockers until after the TUC itself called for one. Worse still, in 1984/85, when the miners' strike posed both the need and possibility for a general strike, the SWP vigorously opposed the fight to get one.

Their argument then was that the slogan "does not fit at the moment because of the way the Labour Party leadership and the TUC general council have sabotaged the movement in solidarity with the miners". (Harman, in *Socialist Worker Review*, quoted above). Yet today, despite the fact that there is no miners' strike, no solidarity action, and a TUC and Labour Party leadership vigorously committed to sabotage, the SWP say a general strike does fit!

Attacks

In reality, in both cases, the slogan "fitted" because the issues at stake superseded sectional struggles and posed general questions. In both cases the objective situation posed the need for a general strike. The Tories in 1984 knew they had to break the miners so as to be able to

One day is not enough

SEVERAL TENDENCIES on the left raise the slogan of a 24-hour General Strike. It is also reported that elements of the NUM bureaucracy are conducting a behind-the-scenes fight for a TUC "day of action".

But the slogan of a 24-hour General Strike is inadequate in present circumstances.

If one day became the focus for cross union action, like the NALGO action planned for 4 November, or indeed the 21 October miners' demo, the call to make it a day of strike action would be an excellent way to advance the struggle. The same is true if the TUC or NUM calls for a "day of action" but refuses to specify strike action for fear of the anti-union laws.

But Marxists have to spell out what is necessary. Either a 24-hour General Strike will be enough to destroy the Tory offensive or it won't.

Warning

Militant, which is arguing for the 24-hour strike, hedges around this question. *Militant* editor Peter Taaffe tells us that the strike would have a "dual purpose"—as a way of assembling the working class for united action and as a warning:

"Failure to retreat on the part of

the government and ruling class would lay the ground for more decisive action."

This is a totally schematic approach to the general strike. It presumes that the movement, and the consciousness of workers, develops along a straight path, one step at a time.

A one day general strike, if achieved, would unite the working class in action. But for what? The answer could only be for an all out general strike. If that is the purpose of the 24-hour general strike then it is stupid to rigidly counterpose the 24-hour strike to the indefinite strike.

The real reason *Militant* refuses to argue for the indefinite general strike is because it does not believe that the consciousness of the majority of workers is yet in favour of it: "Calls for an unlimited general strike will not at this stage be supported by the great mass of the working class".

True, but for that matter neither will the 24-hour general strike. There is no law which says that the consciousness of workers must first pass through the 24-hour strike before the need for an indefinite stoppage is realised.

Revolutionary slogans are not dictated by what the majority will accept today: they are dictated by what

is necessary for the working class to win.

And there is nothing guaranteed about the second half of Taaffe's dual-purpose general strike: It can serve not just as a warning to the government. The union leaders can safely claim to have acceded to the demands of the "revolutionaries" whilst using the 24-hour general strike to dissipate rank and file pressure.

That is why there is no guarantee that even a solid 24-hour strike will be "a political earthquake" or that "things would never be the same again." (Taaffe)

Difference

Even if achieved, it is still not enough to win. Every worker who has taken one day action in their own workplace knows the story. The difference between a day of strike action and an all out strike is qualitative.

The bosses sit tight, secure in the knowledge that the "earthquake" will pass. The same applies to the one day general strike.

It is all very well for *Militant* to claim it is "absolutely opposed to the Italian trade union leaders' methods of organising general strikes", i.e. one day strikes to let off steam and strengthen the bureaucracy's negotiating hand.

But how, concretely, would we prevent any day of action called by the TUC in Britain becoming precisely that? Through the fight for an indefinite general strike and councils of action, precisely the two things *Militant* members are at present arguing and voting against.■



1984/85—when the SWP refused to call for a general strike

carry out a series of attacks on other sections of workers, prove that their anti-union laws could stick and "break trade union power" in Britain.

The general strike was as necessary then as it is now. But fighting for the general strike meant fighting to break the sectionalism that prevented solidarity being delivered to the miners.

It meant fighting to win support for the struggle despite the divisions in the miners' own ranks that led to the creation of the scab UDM. It meant fighting to forge real links between the miners and the dockers, who struck twice and who were twice betrayed by the leaders of the TGWU.

In the face of all of these difficulties the SWP capitulated. The "mood" wasn't there, they said. It was easier to "support" the miners through collections and raffles than to win action from other workers in solidarity with them. So the SWP took the soft option and in the crucial months of the strike

counterposed collecting money and food to fighting for a general strike.

Today, the SWP believe that despite the absence of actual action, the "mood" is there for a general strike. As *Socialist Worker* puts it:

"No one can remember a wave of anger like the present one. No one can remember a time when a general strike was not just necessary to defeat a government, but when the mood of vast numbers of people was so in favour of one."

The SWP often remind people that "the party is the memory of the class". Clearly the SWP is not that party, for it has a very short memory.

Thousands of miners can remember when a general strike was necessary. Thousands of miners can remember the mood in every striking pit village and amongst thousands of dockers in favour of a general strike in July 1984. True the mood of sympathy wasn't as widespread. But the necessity for the strike was there and there was an immediate focus for realising it because two key sections of workers

were actually out on strike.

The SWP forget this because they are not a serious revolutionary party. They are revolutionary in word only. They tailor their politics to fit what they perceive to be the "mood" of the masses. If the mood is angry, let's call a general strike so that we are the left wing expression of that mood. If the mood is more sombre then let's forget what is necessary and argue against the general strike.

This is not revolutionary politics. It is crude "tailism". To determine their slogans the SWP leaders lick their forefingers and hold them up to the wind. They do not make a revolutionary assessment of what the working class needs.

And this is not just an academic argument. If the SWP, the biggest left organisation in Britain, had thrown its weight behind the general strike agitation, instead of throwing its weight against it, perhaps the slogan would have taken off. Perhaps the miners' strike would have sparked a general strike and the defeat could have been avoided.■

ON THE evening of 24 October 1917 (old style calendar), the forces of the Military Revolutionary Committee of the Petrograd Soviet were ordered into action against the Provisional Government of Alexander Kerensky.

Fearful of the independent organisation of the workers and soldiers in their democratic councils of delegates (Soviets), and aware of the threat of a rising, the bourgeois government ordered the arrest of the Military Revolutionary Committee (MRC) and the closure of the Bolshevik party's printshop. Troops and Red guards loyal to the Soviet were dispatched to reopen the printshop, and throughout the night the revolutionary forces occupied railway stations, junctions, the telephone exchange and (having learnt from the failure of the Paris Commune to do so) the state bank.

The government cowered in the Winter Palace, bereft of any significant mass support. On the morning of 25 October soldiers, sailors and Red Guards loyal to the Soviet stormed the Winter Palace, virtually without having to fire a shot. That morning the Second All-Russian Congress of Soviets voted to accept power from the Petrograd Soviet and the MRC. The first workers' state was born. Victory followed in towns and cities across Russia in the days and weeks to come.

The objective basis for the triumph of the revolution lay in the class dynamics of Russian society. The Czarist monarchy, its bureaucracy and the remnants of the feudal nobility were rotting away. The exhaustion of their historical role in the face of the development of capitalism in Russia was accompanied by their political, intellectual and moral decay. As a ruling class, they were incapable of taking society forward.

The industrialisation of Russia had taken place at an accelerated pace through the intervention of foreign European capital. The domestic industrial bourgeoisie, small, lacking roots in the mass of the people and thus politically weakened, faced a proletariat, which, even though it constituted a relatively small proportion of the overall population, was nevertheless highly concentrated in large scale manufacturing enterprises. Its very existence and concentration enabled it to lead the whole of society forward.

Alongside the workers existed a vast land-hungry peasantry. The fact that prior to the revolution a mere 30,000 private landlords owned as much land as fifty million peasants constituted, as Trotsky was later to remark, "a ready-made programme of agrarian revolt". Last but by no means least the revolutionary democratic character of the struggles of subject nationalities against Czarist and Great Russian oppression added to the instability of the existing social order.

Major tasks of the bourgeois revolution remained unsolved in Russia in 1917. Yet the bourgeois class was too weak to resolve them. The revolutionary overthrow of the Czar in February 1917 led not to the consolidation of a stable bourgeois regime able to expand and develop the forces of production on a capitalist basis, but to a prolonged period of instability, of dual power, in which only the working class was able to defend and extend the democratic and revolutionary gains.

Yet the maturity of the objective conditions for social revolution would not alone have been sufficient to resolve the crisis in the interests of the working class. The instrument of the October revolution was the Bolshevik party, a mass workers' party founded on scientific socialist principles. The positive experience of the October victory and the negative experience of subsequent revolutionary defeats from Germany and Spain through to Bolivia and Iran serve only to emphasise the indispensability of this subjective factor.

Not one critic of the role of Bolshevism in the revolution has ever been able to demonstrate, either in theory or in practice, how it is possible for the proletariat to take power without the leadership of a vanguard party armed with a clear conception of its aims and the political resources to achieve them.

Central to the Bolsheviks' success was the party's correct strategical understanding of the nature of the revolution that unfolded after February 1917. This understanding was forged through democratic debate within the party and through the living experience of struggle.

The initial response of the leading cadre of the party to the overthrow of the Czar and the establishment of a bourgeois Provisional Government demonstrated their political unpreparedness for the new situation. The editors of *Pravda*—Kamenev, Muranov and Stalin—wrote on 7 March that the main aim of the revolution was the overthrow of the Czarist autocracy and feudalism, not the overthrow of capitalism. This task was relegated to the distant future. For this reason the paper argued

Seventy-five years ago this month, the most important event in twentieth century history occurred. The seizure of power by the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies signalled the opening of the October Revolution, and the construction of the first ever state founded on the rule of the working class. The overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of working class power in Russia were beacons of hope to the exploited and oppressed everywhere. The Bolsheviks demonstrated, in practice, the validity of revolutionary Marxism's theory and objectives. Richard Brenner explains the way in which the Bolsheviks were able to lead the working class to victory and defends the early Bolshevik regime's attempt to consolidate their victory through the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The Bolsheviks and working class power

Lenin addresses wo

that the Provisional Government should not be overthrown, and that it was, despite being staffed by bourgeois ministers of the conservative and liberal parties, a force for the defence of the revolutionary gains of February.

Amongst the Petrograd worker militants this line was deeply unpopular. Leaflets were issued proclaiming the urgent necessity of advancing towards the struggle for socialism. Likewise Lenin, deeply alarmed by the conservatism of the "old Bolsheviks", argued against the Kamenev and Stalin line. He struggled to re-arm the party theoretically to face its revolutionary tasks.

Even before his return to Russia from exile, he wrote in his *Letters from Afar* that the Petrograd Soviet, far from endorsing and accepting the power of the Provisional Government, should regard itself as the basis for a new government counterposed to that of the bourgeoisie:

"Side by side with this government—which as regards the present war is but the agent of the billion-dollar 'firm' England and France—there has arisen the chief, unofficial, as yet undeveloped and comparatively weak workers' government, which expresses the interests of the proletariat and of the entire poor section of the urban and rural population. This is the *Soviet of Workers' Deputies* in Petrograd, which is seeking connections with the soldiers and peasants, and also with the agricultural workers, with the latter particularly and primarily, of course, more than with the peasants."

He went on to write that anyone arguing that the workers should support the Provisional Government would be "a traitor to the workers", because the government was bound hand and foot to imperialist capital, and therefore to the continuation of the war and the consolidation of the rule of the property owners, even through the restoration of the Czarist monarchy if necessary.

Upon his return to Russia, Lenin submitted to the party his document *Tasks of the Proletariat in the Present Revolution*, known as the *April Theses*. Realising the need for the embryonic organs of working class rule to be used for the purpose of smashing and supplanting the repressive apparatus of the capitalist state, he

argued for the revolution to go forward to a second stage. The dual power existing between the Soviets and the Provisional Government was to be terminated by the transfer of all power into the hands of the Soviets.

It took many weeks for Lenin to win the party to his strategic conception of the next stage through which the revolution must pass. When he first read the *April Theses* to party leaders he was greeted in stony silence, many muttering to each other that he had taken leave of his senses. Against him the schematic argument was raised by right wing Bolsheviks such as Kamenev, echoing the arguments of the Mensheviks, that the bourgeois democratic revolution must first be completed before the workers could pass on to the seizure of power.

This argument has been since raised by "Communist" parties in revolutionary crises the world over as an excuse for ceding power to the national bourgeoisie in the name of "democracy" or "national liberation". Yet Lenin in the *April Theses* recognised that, with the formation of Soviets, the proletariat had developed organs of power that represented, for the workers, a higher form of democracy than any bourgeois parliament, and which could enable the working class to exercise its own dictatorship over the bourgeoisie. He wrote:

"Not a parliamentary republic—to return to a parliamentary republic from the Soviet of Workers' Deputies would be a retrograde step—but a Republic of Soviets of Workers', Agricultural Labourers' and Peasants' Deputies throughout the country, from top to bottom. Abolition of the police, the army and the bureaucracy. The salaries of all officials, all of whom are elective and displaceable at any time, not to exceed the average wage of a competent worker."

Eventually Lenin's strategy for advancing the revolution triumphed in the party. Without this triumph there would have been no October Revolution. But the Bolsheviks could not have come to power simply by virtue of having developed a correct strategy. When the Czar was overthrown the Bolsheviks were the party of only a minority of the vanguard workers. Even in Petrograd at the end of March only forty of the 3,000 delegates to the Soviets adhered to

the Bolshevik fraction.

In order to win the majority within the Soviets for their assumption of power, the Bolsheviks adopted principled but flexible tactics, designed to force the Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries (SRs) to cease equivocation and compromise. Bolshevik slogans directed at these parties demanded they either form a workers' and peasants' government based on the Soviets, or make way for those who would. This adoption of correct tactics was the second condition for the Bolsheviks' success.

The bourgeoisie was unable to deal with mounting problems of war, land reform and national liberation struggles. Aware of the weakness of the Provisional Government, the openly bourgeois parties concluded a deal with the Menshevik and SR leaders of the Petrograd Soviet for the entry of Soviet representatives into the government. This "popular front" was supposed to tie the workers to the bourgeois

The maturity of the objective conditions not alone have been sufficient to resolve the crisis in the interests of the working class. The instrument of the October revolution was the Bolshevik party, a mass workers' party founded on scientific socialist principles.

regime. But it had the opposite effect.

The Soviet "compromisers" steadily undermined their own support in the working class and the peasantry. They continued support for the war and even prepared a deeply unpopular and costly offensive. They postponed calling elections to the Constituent Assembly and sought to limit the power and authority of the Soviets.

By making concessions to the bourgeois and feudal landowners the Mensheviks and SRs failed to satisfy peasant land hunger, which exploded yet again from the time of the harvest onwards in violent land seizures by the peasant masses. As the capitalists looked to sabotage the economy in order to break the organisation and militancy of the workers, factory committees asserted authority over the operation of management at a plant level.



Workers in Moscow's Red Square

Aware of the growing contradiction between the interests of the workers and peasants and the policies of their principal parties, the Mensheviks and SRs, the Bolsheviks utilised tactics which went far beyond mere denunciation and literary exposure of their opponents. They sought to exploit the disparity between the illusions that the masses entertained in their leaders and the concessions to the landowners and bourgeoisie that those self-same leaders were making.

The demand "Down with the Ten Capitalist Ministers" was designed to force the Mensheviks and SRs to break their coalition with the openly bourgeois parties. As Trotsky was later to explain this in no way reflected Bolshevik illusions in the role of the Mensheviks and SRs, but was a method of exposing them: "When the Petersburg masses, led by our party, raised the slogan: 'Down with the Ten Capitalist Ministers!' they thereby demanded

itions for social revolution would solve the crisis in the interests of of the October revolution was the party founded on scientific principles.

that the posts of these ministers be filled by Mensheviks and Narodniks [SRs]. 'Messrs Bourgeois Democrats, kick the Cadets out! Take power into your own hands! Put in the government twelve (or as many as you have) Peshekhonovs, and we promise you, so far as it is possible, to remove you "peacefully" from your posts when the hour will strike—which should be very soon!'"

Similarly the demand "All Power to the Soviets!" was both a call on the existing Soviet leaders to assume full power independently of the bourgeoisie, and a programme for the proletarian revolution itself.

Through its tactics, which were carried into life during every crisis of the regime, through its daily agitation on every issue confronting the workers, peasants and soldiers, the Bolsheviks gained ever more support in the ranks of

the masses. On the eve of the October insurrection they had secured a clear majority in the Soviets for their policies. They embarked upon the insurrection as a genuine mass revolutionary party of the working class.

The accusation that the October insurrection was not a workers' revolution but a mere Bolshevik coup is as old as the revolution itself. It was raised immediately after the insurrection at the Second Congress of Soviets on 25 October by Martov, the leader of the Menshevik Internationalists. It has been stock-in-trade of imperialist propaganda ever since.

In reality Lenin and the Bolshevik leaders were, throughout 1917, careful to distinguish between a seizure of power based on a majority in the Soviets and a mere conspiratorial *putsch* in the tradition of Auguste Blanqui. In July 1917 the Bolsheviks sought to avoid being provoked into a premature rising in view of the lack of support throughout Russia for the assumption of power by the Soviets.

On 20 July Lenin argued that if the Petrograd Bolsheviks were to utilise mass discontent against the war and disenchantment with the Provisional Government in order to seize power, they would be unable to hold it. His words should be imprinted on the memory of every revolutionary socialist who has ever faced the lie that October was no more than a coup:

"We have said more than once that the only possible form of revolutionary government was a soviet of workers', soldiers' and peasants' deputies. What is the exact weight of our fraction in the Soviet? Even in the Soviets of both capitals, not to speak of others, we are an insignificant minority."

The Bolshevik leaders attempted to restrain soldiers, workers and sailors who were carried away by an insurrectionary mood in July, encouraged by anarchists and the adventurist majority in the Bolshevik military organisation who had opposed Lenin's arguments. Unable to prevent an ill-timed insurgency, the Bolsheviks rightly placed themselves at its head, seeking to ensure the maximum discipline. Yet the July rising led to a serious tactical defeat and the temporary imposition of counter-revolutionary repression.

It was in the aftermath of the right wing

Defending the workers' dictatorship

DRAWING ON the work of Marx and Engels, Lenin recognised the state as the product of irreconcilable class antagonisms, the mechanism by which a ruling class applies repressive force in order to defend its property relations from hostile classes. Ridiculing Menshevik and Kautskyite notions of a "classless democracy", Lenin emphasised that, in the period of the transition from capitalism to socialism, the working class would need to exercise a ruthless dictatorship over the bourgeoisie.

In *The State and Revolution*, published in September 1917, Lenin wrote:

"... the dictatorship of the proletariat, i.e. the organisation of the vanguard of the oppressed as the ruling class for the purpose of suppressing the oppressors, cannot result merely in an expansion of democracy. Simultaneously with an immense expansion of democracy, which for the first time becomes democracy for the poor, democracy for the people, and not democracy for the moneybags, the dictatorship of the proletariat imposes a series of restrictions on the freedom of the oppressors, the exploiters, the capitalists. We must suppress them in order to free humanity from wage slavery, their resistance must be crushed by force; it is clear that there is no freedom and no democracy where there is suppression and where there is violence."

As the division of society into classes was progressively undermined by the defeat of capitalist resistance and the development of the socialist economy, so the need for any special apparatus of repression would gradually disappear.

The workers' state established in October 1917 represented an enormous extension of democracy to the toiling masses of Russia. Through the Soviet system workers, soldiers and peasants were able directly to elect their representatives and, through the recallability of Soviet delegates, hold them to account, in a manner impossible under the bourgeois parliamentary system.

revolt of General Kornilov in August that the Bolsheviks regained and greatly increased their influence and prestige, shifting the Soviets dramatically to the left. Calling on the Soviet leadership to arm the workers in defence of the revolution, the Bolsheviks again utilised a form of the united front tactic, combining unity in action with supporters of the Soviet leadership with a relentless critique of the SR Kerensky for his vacillation and cowardice.

The result of this policy was that in September the Petrograd Soviet voted overwhelmingly for a Bolshevik resolution calling for a revolutionary workers' and peasants' government. As the masses lost patience with the compromisers and conciliators of the Menshevik and SR parties, the Bolshevik party steadily took over the leading political role in the majority of Soviets across Russia. It was as the party of the majority of the industrial working class that Bolshevism led the October insurrection. As Lenin put it:

"[In July] we still lacked the support of the class which is the vanguard of the revolution. We still did not have a majority among the workers and soldiers of Petrograd and Moscow. Now we have a majority in both Soviets. It was created *solely* by the history of July and August, by the experience of the ruthless treatment meted out to the Bolsheviks and by the experience of the Kornilov revolt... We have the majority of a *class*, the vanguard of the revolution, the vanguard of the people, which is capable of carrying the masses with it."

This was not the voice of Blanquist *putschism*, but of the workers' revolution. To the various critics of Bolshevism and of Lenin's party in 1917, present day revolutionaries must give a clear response. In history no class has ever taken power other than through its vanguard. The October Revolution had the support of a clear majority of the working class, due to the tireless campaign of the Bolshevik party to raise the political consciousness of the Russian proletariat to the level of its historic tasks.

Without the Bolshevik party, its intransigent insistence on the strategic aim of Soviet power and its tactical flexibility, there would have been no October and no assumption of power by the working class. ■

The Bolsheviks, with an estimated 250,000 members by October, held a majority of the posts in the government established by the Second Soviet Congress, but did not rule alone. Initially they shared power with the left wing of the SRs who had supported the Soviet seizure of power. Authority in the factories was transferred to committees of the workers. In the army power was granted to soldiers' committees which could elect and dismiss officers. The former Czarist courts were abolished and a system for the election of judges was instituted.

Yet the hoped-for norms of the "semi-state", involving a plurality of working class parties within the Soviets and the maximum extension of proletarian democracy, were subsequently undermined. The root causes of this were the tremendous material backwardness of Russia in 1917, the crippling effects of the ensuing Civil War and the failure of the proletarian revolution to succeed in advanced Western Europe, most cruelly of all in Germany.

The Bolsheviks saw the overthrow of capitalism in Russia as the first blow in a series of revolutionary overturns that would be necessary if working class power were to survive. This was so well established a tenet of Bolshevism that even Stalin could write in 1924 (though these writings were subsequently withdrawn):

"For the overthrow of the bourgeoisie, the efforts of one country are enough—to this the history of our own revolution testifies. For the final victory of socialism, for the organisation of socialist production, the efforts of one country, especially a peasant country like ours, are not enough—for this we must have the efforts of the proletarians of several advanced countries."

Lenin and Trotsky both commented on numerous occasions that without the extension of the revolution internationally, victory in Russia would be lost.

The fullest Soviet and proletarian democracy was necessary in order to go forward to socialism. But whilst the Bolsheviks had made and were making history, they were doing so within the constraints of the prevailing, concrete historical circumstances.

The immediate task facing the young Soviet republic was the defence of working class power against counter-revolution.

In 1918-19 fourteen capitalist states committed their armies to war against the fledgling workers' state. A savage civil war ensued in which White generals Kolchak, Denikin and Yudenich submitted the proletarian and peasant populations under their rule to widespread terror and dissolved all Soviet organisations within territories under their control, re-establishing the institutions of the bourgeois state.

The Bolsheviks were obliged to subordinate the requirements of socialist advance to the necessities of revolutionary defence. The Cheka was established as an extraordinary commission to combat counter-revolution. A standing army was re-created, and by mid-1918 it proved necessary to abolish the right to elect officers, in order that those with the greatest military expertise could be appointed without delay, rather than allowing for the gradual training of fresh commanders through the elective principle.

The intensity of the struggle against counter-revolution also demanded the limitation of the democratic rights of the Menshevik and SR parties. In fact it was not until July 1918 that the Mensheviks and the SRs were temporarily excluded from the Soviets. The Left SRs resigned from the Soviet government in protest at the necessary compromise made by the Bolshevik-led regime with German imperialism in the signing of the Brest-Litovsk treaty in March 1918.

Despite the Soviet legality of the government, which had been appointed and confirmed in office by successive All-Russian Congresses of Soviets, the Left SRs returned to their individual terrorist traditions. They launched an armed insurrection against the regime, which resulted in the shooting of Lenin and in the assassination of the leading Bolsheviks Volodarsky and Uritsky.

The Mensheviks and Right SRs also refused to operate as loyal Soviet opposition parties or to accept the validity of the regime and Soviet democracy. Worse, they manoeuvred with and assisted the forces of direct counter-revolution.

Continued overleaf

Continued from previous page

The Menshevik conference of December 1918 was compelled to admit in a resolution that, throughout the Soviet republic, their groups had allied themselves with the propertied classes and had even fought side by side with the Whites against the Red Army and proletarian power.

In such circumstances the Bolsheviks were obliged to exclude these parties from the Soviets. To have done otherwise would have strengthened the forces of bourgeois counter-revolution. Soviets are not like bourgeois parliaments; they are not mere talking shops designed to obscure the true dictatorial nature of class rule. Rather they are executive bodies, organs of the proletarian dictatorship in which the struggle of the working class against reaction can be hammered out in discussion and put into action. Under conditions of military conflict to tolerate supporters of the enemy in a council of war would have been tantamount to treason.

The exclusion of the Mensheviks and SRs from the Soviets was by no means part of a general strategy of the Bolsheviks to establish a one-party state. Both parties continued to operate legally outside the Soviets, and when the Left SRs voted to refrain from armed struggle against the rule of the Soviets, they were granted full rights to operate within them once again. The same approach was taken towards the Menshevik Internationalists when they voted to give direct support to the Soviet regime in the war against imperialist intervention.

Just as force of circumstance and the dynamics of the struggle for the defence of the revolution had obliged the Bolsheviks to retreat in the sphere of Soviet democracy, so their original stress on workers' control at factory level came under pressure from the twin sources of civil war and economic crisis. In his book *Before Stalinism—The rise and fall of Soviet democracy* (Polity Press 1990), Sam Farber, a recent libertarian critic of Bolshevism, has asserted that the policy of War Communism, far from being a necessary retreat forced on the Bolsheviks, implicitly revealed "the political and ideological priorities of mainstream Bolshevism".

Farber argues that:

"... while this set of policies greatly expanded the powers of the central state and vigorously attempted to reduce the role of the market, at the same time it not only consolidated the Red Terror but for all intents and purposes eliminated workers' control of industry and democracy in the Soviets. Again, there is no evidence indicating that Lenin or any of the mainstream Bolshevik leaders lamented the loss of workers' control or democracy in the Soviets, or at least referred to these losses as a retreat, as Lenin declared in connection with the replacement of War Communism by NEP in 1921. In fact... the very opposite is the case, e.g. Lenin defended one-man management as perfectly compatible with socialism."

Preservation

This is untrue. Lenin had initially favoured the preservation of private ownership of large-scale industry and commerce under the supervision of the state. Workers' control would, he hoped, operate as a check on the actions of managers and at the same time provide the workers with a valuable school for self-management of industry. He envisaged the co-ordination of the economy through a Supreme Economic Council involving the unions, co-operatives of consumers and the factory committees which would enforce workers' control at plant level.

It was not the Bolsheviks' doctrinaire prejudice in favour of state ownership but the actions of workers themselves that led to the nationalisations of the first half of 1918. In response to capitalist sabotage, and even the flight of the property owners, the workers took over factories and enterprises and raised the demand for nationalisation. It was the very organs of workers' control that Farber slates the Bolsheviks for subsequently muzzling that carried out the nationalisation policy he so despises. And yet despite the forced pace of these nationalisations, they completed the process of expropriating the capitalists.

But in conditions of acute shortages and economic dislocation, in the face of the unfolding civil war, the factory committees were unable to meet the tasks of co-ordinating production nationally. They too often "spontaneously" treated their own enterprise as an independent unit, trading or exchanging between themselves and obliged to realise a profit in order to compete, in the manner of separate autonomous privately owned enterprises. This self-managed system may have been attractive to petit bourgeois utopians, to anarchists and even to ultra-left elements within the Bolsheviks, but it threatened to undermine the very basis of the workers' state itself.

Faced with this Lenin argued for a retreat. Contrary to Farber's assertions, he recognised

it as such, and in calling for the re-introduction of Taylorism, "one-man management", the use of specialists, the piece-rate system and bonuses for certain labour communes he admitted that:

"This measure not only implies the cessation—in a certain field and to a certain degree—of the offensive against capital... it is also a step backward on the part of our socialist Soviet state power... To conceal from the people the fact that the enlistment of bourgeois experts by means of extremely high salaries is a retreat from the principles of the Paris Commune would be sinking to the level of the bourgeois politicians and deceiving the people."

Initially from June 1918 factory committees continued to play an advisory role, retaining important powers but unable to exercise fully autonomous management. But in November 1919, the Soviet Republic was staring collapse in the face. Food shortages threatened the cities with immediate starvation, and the White Army reached within 200 miles of Moscow.

As a war measure the Bolsheviks were obliged to severely restrict the power of factory committees and to raise labour discipline. One-man management and Workers' Disciplinary Courts were introduced, which were overseen by the trade unions. The Council of Labour and Defence was obliged to turn to the conscription of labour in order to keep the economy going in the face of the war threat. The crudest of the measures of War Communism—the requisitioning of grain—was undertaken in response to the real threat of mass starvation in the cities and the stockpiling of grain in the storehouses of the rich peasants (*Kulaks*).

The alternative proposed by Sam Farber to the measures of War Communism is reliance on market forces. This is sheer utopianism. In conditions of civil war, with a terribly depleted proletariat and the territory controlled by the Reds down to the size of sixteenth century Muscovy, normal trade could not survive and the Bolsheviks knew it.

War Communism, far from being a deliberate and preconceived plan to reduce the role of democracy at factory level in the interests of a ruling elite, was the precondition for the survival of any type of Soviets and for the very survival of the workers' state. The alternative in reality was

not Farber's utopia, but victory for the White generals. It is to the credit of the Bolsheviks that they did not flinch from extraordinary measures to defend the gains of October.

The continuation of grain requisitioning and the militarisation of labour at the end of the civil war were certainly mistakes for which the Bolsheviks were to pay dearly. Peasant revolts, strikes and the Kronstadt rebellion demonstrated this and forced the tremendous economic retreat of the New Economic Policy (NEP).

Were the Bolsheviks justified in crushing the Kronstadt revolt? We believe so. We do not glorify this tragic episode, but we recognise its necessity and legitimacy in the face of the threat the rising posed to the existence of the workers' state.

The Kronstadt sailors, despite radical demands and rhetoric couched in the language of defending and extending Soviet power, reflected in their social composition and in their programme the social weight and interests of the peasantry. As the mutineers' proclamation made clear: "Let the whole world know, the power of the Soviets frees the toiling peasantry from the yoke of the Communists". This was a revolt of the petit bourgeoisie against the severity and hardship imposed by the proletarian revolution.

The demand for Soviets without Communists meant, in the concrete conditions facing the republic at that time, the disintegration of working class rule. That is why the demand was immediately taken up by reactionaries, the SRs and bourgeois liberals. If the Bolsheviks had delayed in crushing the revolt, French and White plans to land at Kronstadt and launch an offensive on Petrograd could have succeeded. The involvement in the revolt of misguided but subjectively revolutionary elements did not alter and ought not to have altered the determination of the Communists to crush it.

Kronstadt more than any other event alerted the Communists to the need to retreat from War Communism and end the requisitioning of grain. The *smychka*—the alliance of the working class with the peasantry—had been an essential prerequisite to October and was crucial to the survival of the revolution. Hence the need for NEP, with all its attendant risks in promoting the growth of the rich peasantry and bureaucratisation of the party itself.

In order to prevent the concessions being made to the peasantry promoting the development of alien class forces within the Communist Party, the Tenth Congress of the party in 1921 imposed a ban on party factions. This was not intended to prevent discussion altogether. Thus paragraph 4 of the draft resolution on Party Unity declared that "Criticism of the Party's shortcomings, which is absolutely necessary, must be conducted in such a way that every practical proposal shall be submitted immediately, without any delay, in the most precise form possible, for consideration and decision to the leading local and central bodies of the Party." But such proposals were not to be submitted to groups formed on the basis of platforms.

The ban was intended to be a temporary measure to resist the pressure of the petit-bourgeoisie and peasantry within the party. Platforms in elections to the Central Committee were not prohibited. The ban was accompanied by a purge which aimed to expel careerist elements who had flocked into its organisations throughout the Civil War.

However, far from immunising the party against bureaucratisation and adaptation to alien class elements, the ban and the purge had the opposite effect. It laid the ground for the emergence and domination within the apparatus of the Stalin clique, itself a faction perfectly adapted to the petit-bourgeois outlook of the emerging bureaucratic ruling stratum. It utilised its control to throw open the gates of the party to place-seekers and pliant officialdom as soon as Lenin had died. The party members were denied the opportunity to discuss and develop political ideas.

We believe, as did Trotsky towards the end of his life, that the ban on factions was a mistake. It inhibited class consciousness within the party and hence in Soviet society. Neither can it be argued that the ban was unavoidable. From 1917-21, when the party faced the gravest of dangers from within and without, a strictly centralised but fully democratic internal structure enabled debate and discussion around central issues such as the trade union question, the Brest-Litovsk peace (even at the time of the Left SR revolt), and about the planning and desirability of the insurrection itself on the eve of October.

The application of NEP to preserve the *smychka* should have been accompanied by the fullest possible discussion at all levels of the party and the redefinition of the party programme in order to make the exclusion of alien class elements possible without encouraging incipient bureaucratisation. By October 1923 Trotsky and the opposition, in the "Platform of the Forty-Six", drew attention to the fact that the ban had assisted rather than impeded bureaucratisation, though at that stage Trotsky still accepted it as having been a necessity.

Independence

The ban was not a result of Lenin and Trotsky's desire to establish a pliant party or hostility to the very principles of proletarian democracy, but a dangerous and ultimately failed attempt to preserve the political independence of the workers' interests within the party. It was not part of Bolshevism's programme or normal method of operating, as the Stalinists later claimed.

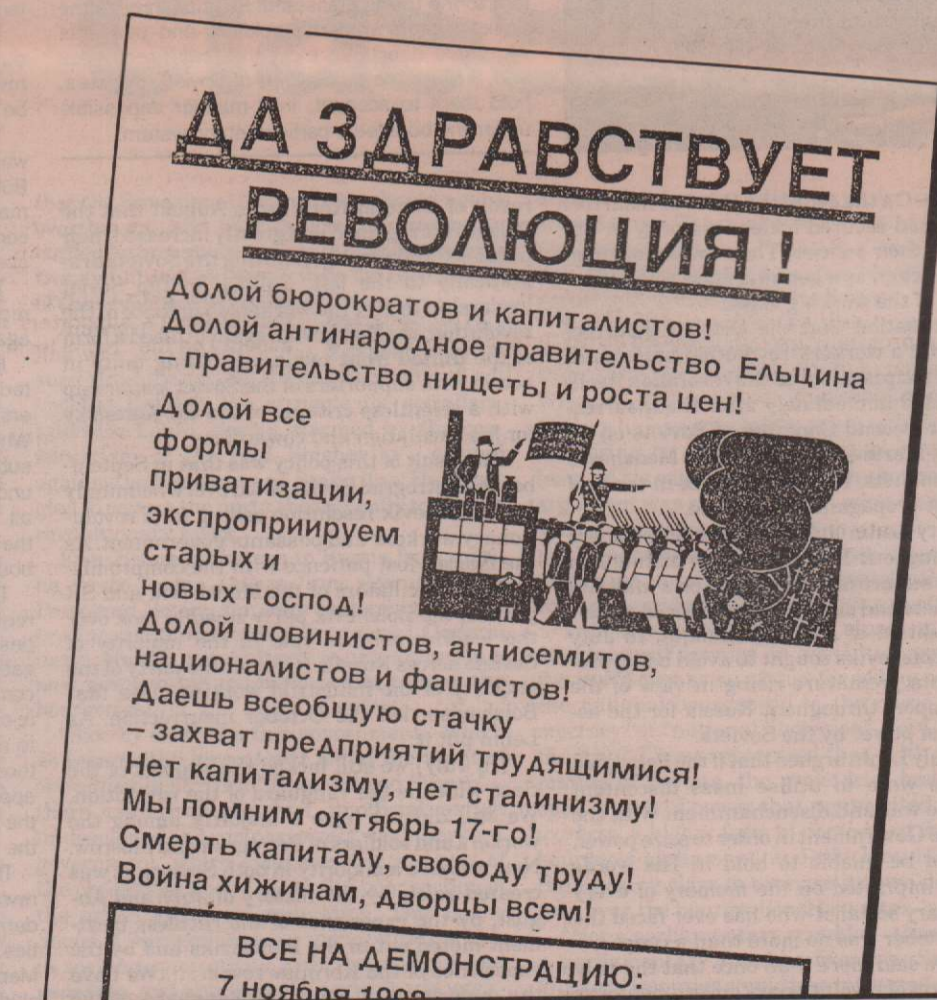
The Revolution degenerated due to its isolation, the enforced nature of compromise with the peasantry, the economic and social devastation wrought by the wars of intervention and the civil war, and the failure of the European workers to take power.

In the face of these conditions, the revolutionary leadership of the Bolsheviks correctly sought to defend the revolution. Lenin towards the end of his life and Trotsky, in the 1923 opposition and after, fought against the bureaucratisation of the party, ultimately without success. But their fight reveals that the degeneration of the Russian Revolution was not the consequence of the Bolsheviks' programme.

Some emergency measures were necessary departures from the real programme of Bolshevism for workers' democracy. The usurpation of power by the Stalin faction negated that programme and destroyed the revolution.

The core of Farber's critique, and that of all libertarians, is that it was impermissible to sacrifice workers' democracy, plurality of Soviet parties, and workers' control at factory level—even if only temporarily—in the defence of the economic gains of the revolution. He compares the norms of workers' democracy in a healthy semi-state with the forms it must adopt in a life-or-death struggle with capital and objects to what he sees.

With such a normative method Farber, and all libertarian critics of Bolshevism, reveal their own passivity and bankruptcy. Faced with the first serious obstacle that reality places in the way of the dictatorship of the proletariat these critics give up.■



LRCI SUPPORTERS in the CIS, along with the Socialist Workers' Union (linked to the British WRP/Workers Press) and the Federation of Revolutionary Anarchists, have called a demonstration in Moscow to mark the 75th anniversary of the Russian Revolution.

That day will see an outpouring of nationalist filth and nostalgia for Stalin's purges organised by the newly formed National Salvation Front. The red flag will be carried side by side with the banner of fascist Pamyat, and the proto-fascist Nashe movement, providing Yeltsin does not succeed in banning the NSF's activities.

At the same time the former bureaucrats in Yeltsin's camp will be telling CIS workers to forget their history of revolutionary struggle and accept 300% inflation and massive cuts in living standards. They may deploy the police to ban all demonstrations, and will certainly continue to harass and repress the left.

Our demonstration may be small, but it will be based on the only possible starting point for a fightback against Yeltsin's capitalist restoration plans: total rejection of the Stalinist-fascist bloc, and one message to workers who support it—leave it. We call on every international workers' organisation to lend support to the demonstration and send revolutionary greetings to all those in Russia fighting Stalinism and capitalist restoration.■

Copies of *Rabochaya Vlast* (Workers Power) and the LRCI's new Russian Language theoretical journal available from Workers Power.

BOSNIA

New phase of the carve up

BY MARTIN SUCHANEK

AT THE end of October Croatian militia forces in Bosnia clashed with Bosnian troops loyal to the government of President Alija Izetbegovic around Novi Travnik and Vitez.

In Mostar, the capital of the self-proclaimed statelet of Herzeg-Bosnia, Croatian tank corps surrounded the Bosnian army. In a statement the Croatian headquarters openly refused to recognise the authority and legitimacy of the Sarajevo government or the Bosnian defence forces.

The clashes signalled the breakdown of the alliance between the Croats and the largely muslim Bosnian forces. The scene is now set for a final carve up of the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina between the Croats and the Serbs. It threatens even more people with pogroms, starvation and expulsion. Already the Croat forces have expelled several thousand muslims from the town of Prozor.

The aim of the Croatian nationalist forces of Mate Boban (President Tudjman of Croatia's spokesman in Bosnia) and his fascist Ustashi allies, is clear. It is to consolidate and extend the territorial gains made through the establishing of Herzeg-Bosnia, with the aim of eventually linking it to a greater Croatia.

In this they are following in the footsteps of their equally reactionary Serbian "enemies", who were, at least up till now, responsible for the major part of the atrocities, murders, and "ethnic cleansing" in the war, and who now control approximately two thirds of the republic of Bosnia's territory.

Faced with the impending liquidation of the Bosnian Republic the imperialists, the very same governments who led Izetbegovic to call a referendum and push for independence, remain predictably silent. The German imperialists have no intention of taking any action against their friends in Zagreb. Their great concern for "peace" and arguments for intervention to stop the war is revealed for what it always was; a cover for their own economic, political and diplomatic interests.

Last month's events have also exposed the bankruptcy of President Izetbegovic and his "Muslim Party of Democratic Action" (SDA). Having taken the imperialists' promises for good coin they have led the Bosnian muslims into a trap, where they are now threatened with total dispersal.

The imperialists will no doubt

adopt resolutions which condemn the attack on muslim towns and communities by the Croat army. They will float fine plans for autonomous regions within a maintained Republic of Bosnian-Herzegovina in the knowledge that they will remain just that—plans. They will send some more "monitors", but they will do nothing to support the Bosnians right to self-determination.

Revolutionaries must defend all Yugoslav communities against chauvinist and pogromist attacks from all sides. For example the defence of Sarajevo against the Serbian army and militia siege was, and is, justified. Whilst we do not support the reactionary aims of any of the warring factions, we are in no way indifferent to the fate of the muslim population—or to any other national group or community which is threatened by nationalist onslaught.

For revolutionary and working class forces on the ground this may require agreements on joint action against nationalist and fascist aggressors from the Serbian and Croatian side. But such united fronts have to be strictly limited and no political support for the official muslim leaders and their reactionary aims must be given. Workers should understand that if the forces of Izetbegovic had the upper hand they too would be driving other minorities from their homes.

We do not share or support the territorial ambitions of many of the Bosnian leaders to force the Serbian and Croatian minorities into a unified capitalist state of Bosnia-Herzegovina, threatening them with national oppression through forcible integration. On the contrary, we firmly oppose any such policy.

The way forward for the Bosnian muslims does not lie in an ethnically based muslim state. At best it would be a mini-state chronically dependent on imperialism for its survival, a sell-out at the negotiations in Geneva. Alternatively as a "big" Bosnia-Herzegovina it would be a state oppressing its Croat or Serb minority. Such a "solution", achieved by bloody war, would only lead to further national tensions, not to the building of a bridge between the nationalities.

As the League for a Revolutionary Communist International (LRCI) recognised at the beginning of the nationalist war in Bosnia, a progressive solution to the crisis is

not possible by means of separation or secession. This remains true today. It proves the importance and actuality of the strategy of permanent revolution.

There can be no progressive outcome, no lasting and non-oppressive solution to the fratricidal war short of a proletarian revolutionary one—the creation of a multinational workers' republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina as a step to a broader Socialist Federation of the Balkans. ■



Colonel Sanders in Shanghai

CHINA

Capitalism in Deng's lifetime?

BY JOHN MCKEE

AS THE eighty eight year old Deng Xiaoping waved vaguely at the applauding delegates of the 14th Chinese Communist Party (CCP) Congress, wrist still bound in the surgical tape from his intravenous drip, he must—assuming he knew where he was—have felt a sense of triumph.

For the CCP's 14th Congress ended in mid-October with his fellow "capitalist roaders" firmly at the helm.

Party General Secretary, Jiang Zemin, set the tone in his opening speech. He heaped praise on the "brilliant theses" expounded by Deng on a visit to South China at the start of 1992. Deng has apparently made the startling discovery that it was possible to have a capitalist market economy without the risk of the country turning capitalist!

The central theme of the congress and the policy for the next five years was to firmly establish the "socialist market economy".

What this means in practice is deepening the policies fostered by Deng since the late 1970s. These have allowed a vast increase in the amount of goods produced for a growing free market. The result has been the enormous expansion of a class of rich peasants producing agricultural goods for the market. Large scale township and village enterprises produce an ever increasing proportion of China's light industrial goods, not on the basis of central planning but on the basis of market demand.

Most importantly it has meant the massive expansion of foreign owned industry and joint enterprises throughout southern China, especially in the "Special Economic Zones" in Guangdong province.

The last Congress was in 1987. In between that and 14th Congress came the explosion of student and worker demonstrations against the Stalinist regime which ended in the bloody massacre of hundreds in Tiananmen Square in 1989.

For a while Deng's so called "modernisation process" was stalled. The leading moderniser, General Secretary Zhao Ziyang, was disgraced for failing to crack down on the democ-

racy movement and placed under house arrest, where he still remains.

Li Peng, a major architect of the massacre and a party figure known to be luke-warm towards rapid marketisation, remains as Prime Minister. The 14th Congress ensured that Li Peng's supporters are in a minority on the crucial leading committees of the Party.

The imperialists' feigned outrage at the crushing of the democracy movement has quickly given way to business as usual with the Stalinist dictatorship in Peking. The suspension of aid and other contacts with China was quickly rescinded. Japan led the way less than a year after the massacre by resuming a massive programme of loans and investment in southern China.

Between 1986 and 1991 Japan has poured over \$3.2 billion in investment into China, pushing the USA into fourth place in the investment league. Only Hong Kong and Taiwan have greater investments in China's new free market.

The reason for the rapid expansion of imperialist investment in China is obvious. It presents a virtually unlimited market of billions of people, a phenomenally cheap but well educated workforce, virtually unrestricted profit repatriation from the Special Economic Zones, and above all a dictatorship which ensures a strike-free and stable environment for capitalist investment.

Already the capitalist press is speculating whether the Chinese road to capitalism might not be more successful than the Russian. For all their talk about the "socialist market economy", the wing of the Chinese bureaucracy most fully committed to the market know full well that this road leads inevitably to the restoration of capitalism and with it the destruction of the CCP.

As in the former USSR, growing sections of the Chinese bureaucracy increasingly see their future tied up, not with the Communist Party and the statified economy, but with the foreign capitalists and the development of private Chinese capital.

The CCP leadership hopes to avoid the economic and political crisis that blew apart the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) by promoting large scale state capitalism and joint ventures with the imperialists under the control of a rigid party dictatorship. They think that by stamping out any sign of opposition and calls for democracy, both within and outside the party, they can avoid the divisions that destroyed the CPSU.

This happy scenario of a "peaceful road to capitalism" is a utopia. It is based above all on the assumption that the free market can dynamise the stagnating bureaucratically planned economy without plunging the existing system into crisis. This is impossible. As the free market erodes the already faltering bureaucratic plan even further, inflation and disruption of the economy has threatened to stall economic growth.

Little attempt has been made to deal with the growing economic crisis that afflicts the state industries which employ over 100 million workers. Fifty per cent of these industries are massive loss makers according to the new free market economics. Deng's supporters have been reluctant to push through sweeping attacks on workers in state industries, remembering Tiananmen and fearing their response.

When they tried to introduce "reforms" involving wage cuts, productivity deals and up to 20% redundancies in the Shanghai industrial region, they were rapidly forced to back-pedal in the face of what a Party paper described as "worker turmoil".

With workers' wages already eroded by inflation and huge gaps opening up between the new, rich marketeers and the workers, Jiang Zemin's statement at the congress that "we should widen differences in personal income to a reasonable degree" will mean further conflict with the working class.

Deng's faction might well be pleased with its work at the 14th Party Congress, but it is sowing the seeds of mighty struggles with the Chinese masses as it drives the economy towards capitalist restoration. ■



WP: Can you tell us about your campaign?

TM: We are trying to highlight the events around the 2 March mass strip search of women prisoners and strip searching in general. I became part of the committee because my partner has been in prison for nine years and in that time she has suffered numerous strip searches. In particular, during her trial she was strip searched twice a day every day. The reason we came to England is to highlight the issue among trade union groups, political groups and anyone who will listen to us to put pressure on the Northern Ireland Office (NIO) and the British government to end any policy of strip searching on any prisoner in any prison.

WP: Was the mass search on 2 March part of a systematic pattern?

TM: Yes. Strip searching initially started in November 1982. Most of the strip searching up until 2 March was during trials and during prison visits from partners and relations. The NIO decided to escalate the strip search policy as a way of intimidating the non-conforming prisoners.

MB: It's torture to try and break the 21 women in Maghaberry Prison. The other section of the prison is the male side and they are all conforming prisoners. These 21 are not conforming. Maghaberry Prison is a "model" prison for the NIO and they don't want anybody rocking the boat for them. These 21 women are rocking the boat and they are trying everything in their power to get them to conform. But the women are not going to conform so this torture is going to be kept on and on.

The thing about Maghaberry was that it was portrayed as a new liberal prison. When they closed Armagh they thought that the women coming into this prison would conform to the prison system and settle down. Because the women are political prisoners they did not do that. So not only are they attacked in the physical sense of being strip searched, they are attacked in every fashion—mentally, physically, sexually.

The other point that I wanted to make was about the one woman that wasn't strip searched for medical reasons. She had had a hysterectomy so they were able to frisk her and put a detector over her. So if they could do it for one why not do it for the other twenty women instead of forcibly strip searching them?

TM: On 2 March seventy screws came to strip search the 21 women singing "Happy days are here again". This sort of thing exposes what they're attempting to do. They are attempting to defeat what they see as the smallest minority of non-conforming prisoners in every way they can. On another occasion the male prison officers sexually assaulted one woman before she was strip searched. They were rubbing their hands over her body, making extreme sexual comments. Then they came back again and did the same with another woman prisoner.

That is the sort of situation that was arising. The prison officers were beating up the prisoners using what they call pressure point locks. Lock one, you put their arm in a certain position, lock two you change position and it immobilises the person who they are removing from the cell. During these immobilisations they continue to beat the women.

MB: I also want to say that after the assaults on the women they were all given further punishment.

TM: The women put a judicial

Stop strip searches!

Last month supporters of the Belfast Anti-Strip Search Campaign, came to Britain to explain to workers the plight of women republican prisoners in the Maghaberry prison in Northern Ireland. Workers Power spoke to two representatives of the Maghaberry Defence Tour, **Mena Baker** and **Tony McCabe**, while they were here.

The press is whipping up anti-IRA hysteria in Britain because of the current bombing campaign. But not one paper points out that the reason the IRA plant bombs is because the British imperialist state runs the Six Counties as a colony based on loyalist domination, has an army of occupation to terrorise the nationalist population into submission and wages a relentless war against the nationalist community.

The systematic torture of republican prisoners is part of Britain's war effort. The campaign against such brutality in the British working class must be part of the struggle to get the British troops out of Ireland and to secure the basic democratic right of the Irish people as a whole to determine the future of their country.

review into the courts against the sentences they received, which basically were the loss of all privileges within the prison, solitary confinement, isolation, the removal of any of what they would call privileged visits, a parcel, anything. This judicial review went in front of a judge. He is called George Carswell. George Carswell handles all judicial reviews coming out of prisons. George Carswell is a true upholder of anything the prison service or the state says. He is known for handing down horrific sentences. The judge refused the review and argued that it's the women who were violently strip searched who should be charged with assault rather than the prison officers.

MB: From 1983 up until this mass strip search in March there have only ever been about five items found—the likes of perfume and a five pound note—but that was mostly on criminals, nothing to do, to the best of our knowledge, with the republican prisoners.

TM: They found a personal letter and some perfume, which have no security aspect at all. What they do, and what Judge Carswell has made legitimate, is they have a blanket word—security. Under this word they can do anything to these women. Carswell has said to the screws—you can sexually assault the prisoners, you can beat them, I will uphold it, I have given my ruling. There is an appeal in against this ruling at the moment, but because of the nature of the courts in the six counties, there wouldn't be a great deal of hope held out for it.

WP: It's like a blank cheque to torture.

TM: Yes. That's the most frightening thing for the women, knowing that it's now legal, that if the appeal is refused then the women have nowhere to go. If they wake up in the morning and the prison authorities say "we're coming in"—which has happened at times—search teams have been at the prison at five o'clock in the morning.

That can happen at Maghaberry. They have no come back on that, they have no legal rights whatsoever within the prison. If it isn't stopped now these girls will never get over what happened on 2 March. They are very strong women, no doubt about that, but it's bound to be with them. It is state rape no matter what way you put it.

All the girls went to the doctor the next morning and the doctor asked them how they got their bruises and their markings and he sent them away with two Anadin and that was that. He'd seen the bruises and the cuts. He'd seen Corin Quinn's face was black from where they had actually banged her face off the cell floor. They never went back near him again after that.

WP: Since the March events has the campaign been stepped up?

MB: Well after 2 March the Anti-Strip Searches Committee was formed with the likes of me and Tony and other relatives and friends. Basically we really only started letter writing to England, America, Belgium, Germany and other countries to see what support we could get from them. This tour is really the first major thing we have done through the campaign although we have contacts in Dublin.

WP: How has it gone in Britain?

MB: Well, over here we have been very well accepted. People have said they supported us and have been willing to write to people for us and even write to the guards themselves to show their support to the women. We were surprised that people just don't know the reality of what is happening in Northern Ireland and its prisons.

WP: Who have you managed to speak to so far?

TM: We spoke to different trade union branches and we had a press

conference in the House of Commons. And we spoke at the Campaign Against Domestic Violence demonstration. The NALGO Women's Committee has helped us. We've done some interviews to try and highlight the issue. One of the points we have been making when we go round, particularly at the moment the way things are in England, especially with the miners etc, is to say to British workers that what they try on us in Northern Ireland will be used against you.

In 1984 when they had the miners' strike what they learned in Ireland they brought here and they used it to full effect. The beatings of miners etc, through the use of the prisons, the courts. If strip searching is not stopped in all prisons, if that sort of situation arises again, it'll be women political activists and male political activists in prisons here getting strip searched to try and demoralise and humiliate them.

WP: What sort of things do you think could be done in Britain for the campaign?

TM: Well the first thing we are looking for is a concrete, solid campaign for people to influence, for instance, trade unionists. For people to work through their branches and regions right up to as much of their leadership as will react to it. The same with politicians, with politicians who have shown a genuine interest: Jeremy Corbyn, Tony Benn. The shadow minister for Northern Ireland, Kevin MacNamara has made a statement saying this is totally unnecessary and unjustified. What we would say is for him to put that into print as a Labour Party politician.

MB: We want them to do much more than what they are doing at the moment, to come right out and make a stand to help us, not just simply on paper but to do something.

WP: It's obvious that the whole use of that form of torture against republicans is part of

the British state's attempt to break the will, not only of republican prisoners but, by extension and by example, the nationalist community. How do you see a campaign like this fitting into the overall struggle against the British presence?

TM: There's no doubt it's part of an overall campaign, especially in prisoners' struggles. As you know, prisoners are representative of every part of the six counties and over the years prisoners' struggles have been a source of inspiration, from the hunger strikes in 1981 and previous to that, to the blanket protest, to internment etc.

They have always tried to defeat prisoners. Margaret Thatcher stated that the prisons will be the breaker's yard for republican resistance in Ireland. They are doing the same type of thing with the women.

They are trying to defeat the women. They will do the same type of thing on men at different stages. At the moment they are picking on what they would see as the smallest minority of non-conforming political prisoners. So they will attack them and attempt to defeat them. Which probably reflects the whole situation in the six counties. They are attacking probably in every way through different forms of repression, anyone who does not conform to their idea of what they want within the six counties.

MB: They want to break these women, but the women—they'll not break. ■

To help finance the tour that has taken place, future tours and the work of the Anti-Strip Search Campaign, please send donations and messages of support to:

Maghaberry Defence Tour
c/o Box 7
136 Kingsland High Street
London
E8 2HS

Make cheques/POs payable to:
Maghaberry Defence Tour



Defeat the anti-abortion amendment

AS WE go to press the Irish Government is imminently expected to fall apart, leading to a general election on the same day as the Abortion Referendum already set for 3 December. That depends on whether or not Fianna Fáil's coalition partner, the Progressive Democrats (PDs), deliver on their threat to quit the government.

A month ago Finna Fáil announced a referendum with separate votes on three propositions. These would qualify the anti-abortion Eighth Amendment of 1983 which states that:

"The state acknowledges the right to life of the unborn, and with due regard to the equal right to life of the mother, guarantees in its laws to respect, and as far as practicable, by its laws, to defend and vindicate that right."

One of the three amendments from Fianna Fáil was contrived to deliberately break the all-party consensus which had so far blocked any new concession to the "Pro-Life Campaign". Taoiseach Albert Reynolds' proposal was a major concession to the right-wing. It aimed to tighten up the anti-abortion Eighth Amendment so as to cancel the Supreme Court judgement of February, which allowed "a real and substantial risk of suicide" as legal grounds for abortion.

Fianna Fáil's Attorney General had used the Eighth Amendment as a mandate to "vindicate" the rights of an "unborn child" in the case of a 14-year old, pregnant as a result of being raped. He got an injunction to stop her going to Britain for an abortion.

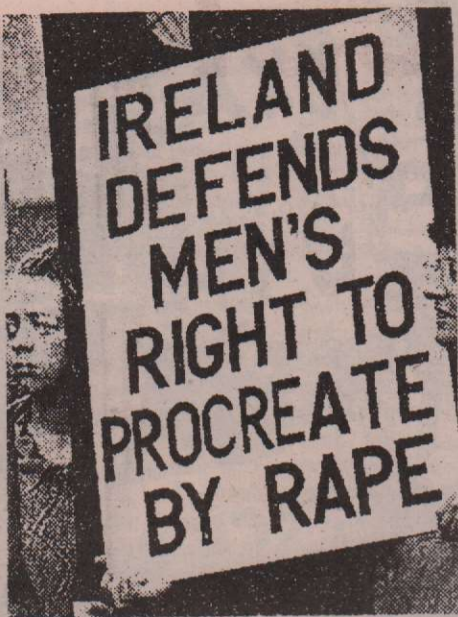
The tide of mass anger which swept the country forced the Government to arrange an appeal to the Supreme Court. Rather than simply being allowed to travel, she was given the right to a termination in Ireland without any time limitation.

Promised

After that Reynolds quickly promised he would amend the Constitution to guarantee the right of travel (for abortion), and a limited right to information on abortion. The Thirteenth Amendment aims to prevent further embarrassment by court injunctions on women travelling and, crucially would guarantee the continued dumping onto Britain of the 5,000 women a year seeking abortion.

The Fourteenth Amendment aims to defuse the growing abortion information campaign which led to student leaders being fined by the High Court. On 29 October the European Court of Human Rights declared the existing Irish ban on abortion information as contrary to human rights because it failed to reduce the rate of abortions but actually made conditions worse for the women and dangerously delayed their terminations.

Polls predict that the Thirteenth and



Fourteenth Amendments will be easily carried despite opposition from the extreme right-wing minority of "Pro-lifers".

It is the other (Twelfth) Amendment which set a cat among the pigeons and threatened a new danger to women. This explicitly excludes the threat of "self-destruction" as grounds for a termination. Even more divisively, it states that a "termination of pregnancy" will be legal where there is a "real and substantial threat to the life, as distinct from the health" of the mother.

All other parties opposed this implied sacrificing of women's health in cases of illness where a termination might improve prospects of treatment and full recovery. The PDs also publicly opposed it in words but voted in the cabinet and in the Dáil to support it. Their excuse was that failure to vote for it would cause a general election on the abortion issue.

Having failed to provoke an election on this basis, Reynolds made a second attempt. At the judicial tribunal inquiring into fraud and political corruption in the meat industry he repeatedly accused his fellow-minister and PD leader Des O'Malley of lying in testimony given months earlier. The infuriated PDs are expected to walk out of the next cabinet meeting and bring down the government.

A general election would not now stop the Referendum being held. And it will be on the very terms which the PDs condemned as turning the clock back, terms they voted for to "prevent an election".

Reynolds plans to snooker the powerful Catholic hierarchy with the Twelfth Amendment. The bishops resent the explicit provision in law for any "termination of pregnancy" but are assuaged by the elimination of the suicide option and "health" grounds.

They know that if this Amendment is defeated the Supreme Court ruling will continue in force. Rather than mobilise to defeat it, they will probably issue no advice on how to vote. This undermines the extreme-right "Pro-Life Campaign" and has silenced much of the anti-abortion wing of Fianna Fáil itself.

The bishops will nevertheless step up their pulpit and press campaign against the "evil of abortion" in the hope of later forcing a further referendum to remove any reference to legal terminations of pregnancy. They argue that destruction of the foetus in the act of saving the mother's life should never be called an abortion or termination.

Polls indicate 47% for the Twelfth Amendment, 29% against and the rest undecided. Whether it is won or lost will make a practical difference in only a tiny number of cases. Either outcome would not change the reality for 99% of the 5,000 Irish women forced to terminate their crisis-pregnancies in secret trips to Britain each year under the continuing stigma of criminalisation at home.

Battle

The referendum battle is, however, crucial in the ideological struggle against Catholic power over the state. A victory for the pro-choice forces will enormously encourage the opening up of a struggle for positive abortion rights.

Democratic Left leader De Rossa has gone furthest at parliamentary level in calling for abortion to be available in all cases of rape, incest and where a foetus is not viable—as well as on grounds of health or suicidal danger.

The Repeal the Eighth Amendment Campaign, however, has failed to fight for the very demand from which it takes its name. It has stood far to the right of De Rossa in not fighting for its own conference call for abortion rights in cases of rape and incest. The feminists who lead it, with the support of a representative of *Militant Socialist* on its national committee, have confined themselves to a minimal position of opposing the Twelfth Amendment.

The Dublin Abortion Information Campaign, which argues for the unrestricted provision of abortion for any woman wanting a termination, has become the main mobilising group in the capital but is boycotted by both the Socialist Workers Movement and *Militant* who run their own tiny front organisations on a minimal platform. A national Alliance for Choice is attempt-

ing to co-ordinate the canvass for a "No-Yes-Yes" vote to the three amendments.

The IWG is actively supporting the independent struggle of the Dublin Abortion Information Campaign with the perspective of laying the basis for a national abortion rights campaign. The IWG is actively promoting its call for a broad demonstration and rally in the capital against the Twelfth Amendment, "For Women's Health and Life" on 28 November.

IWG speakers have addressed public meetings arguing for the building of this campaign and for a struggle for free and legal abortion on demand. In Galway Regional College the student union had an IWG speaker address a canteen meeting of 500 students on our line; the IWG initiated the building of two student action groups in the city to fight in the referendum campaign.

A general election, when it is called, will face the labour and trade union movement with enormous challenges. Two working class parties, Labour and Democratic Left are likely to be the only forces claiming to challenge the ruling class as it prepares major new attacks on living standards, welfare and social services and state companies.

Both parties, however, are fully committed to the defence of the capitalist system and only voice the most limited criticism of the capitalist offensive. Either of them could play a crucial role in helping to form a new capitalist coalition government after the election.

Struggle

Both must be relentlessly confronted, in every struggle, with the demand to mobilise a real fight against cuts and privatisation, for the right to work and for women's rights, inside and outside the Dáil. They must be forced into refusing any support to either of the alternative capitalist governments on offer after the next election, even if that immediately forces a new election.

Fighting on this basis, the IWG will call for a vote for Labour and Democratic Left and urge workers' organisations to demand full co-operation between the parties to maximise the vote against the openly capitalist parties.

The test of struggle will best prove to class-conscious workers and fighters for women's liberation that only their own independent self-organisation and a revolutionary political alternative can win their demands. ■

Irish Workers Group: J Larkin, c/o 12 Langrishe Place, Dublin 1, Ireland

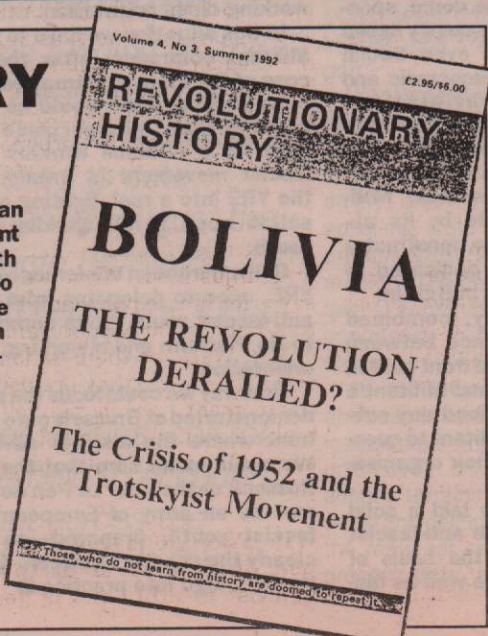
Abortion Information Helpline: (Dublin) 01 - 679 4700

REVOLUTIONARY HISTORY

The current issue of *Revolutionary History* is an intensive study of the Trotskyist movement during the Bolivian Revolution of 1952, with articles by Pierre Broué, Guillermo Lora, Liborio Justo, José Villa and others. The next issue will be a study of the Trotskyist movement in South Africa, which is being assembled under the guidance of the noted South African revolutionary and scholar Baruch Hirson.

Price (including postage) is UK: £3.50 each, £7.00 for both, Europe: £4.00/£8.00, elsewhere: £5.00/£10.00. Cheques or International Money Orders in Pounds Sterling, made payable to Socialist Platform Ltd.

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BOLIVIA 1952

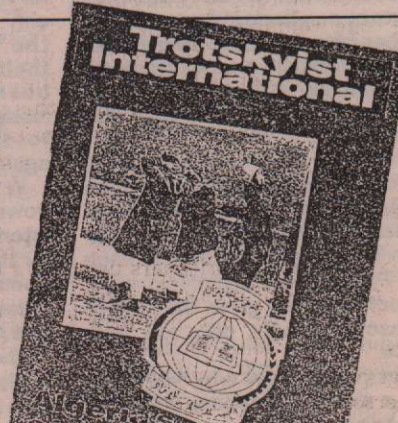
The lost revolution

Joint meeting with Al Richardson, editor of revolutionary history, and a speaker from the Workers Power editorial board.

PLENTY OF TIME FOR DISCUSSION

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US ELECTIONS

No choice for workers

On the eve of the US presidential election **G R McColl** analyses the class issues at stake. In our next issue we will carry a full analysis of the election result and look at the prospects for the workers' struggle in the USA.

BY THE time you read this either Bush or Clinton will have been elected president of the USA. Both candidates are pure representatives of the US bosses. For the working class there is nothing to choose between the two. As usual, popular alienation from the puppet show called US democracy will mean that 50% or less of the potential electorate will have voted.

As we go to press, despite the narrowing of the race, it seems that only a surge of support for the right wing populist nutter Ross Perot can stop Democrat Bill Clinton from being elected.

Little more than a year ago Bush's hold on the White House seemed unshakable. Basking in the glory of imperialism's triumph in the Gulf War, the president's popularity soared to new heights. This year, as his much vaunted "New World Order" fragmented, and the US economy stagnated, Bush's luck ran out.

Suddenly, the bosses' press, which had mollycoddled Ronald Reagan, began to notice that Bush had difficulty stringing together a coherent sentence and suffered memory lapses. US workers and large sections of the middle class were bearing the brunt of the sharpest economic downturn since the Great Depression, with Bush's talk of recovery ringing increasingly hollow. Even then media pundits tended to deride the field of challengers for the Democratic nomination and assumed a comfortable victory for the Republi-

cans.

Unlike Britain, where the Tory government steadfastly refused to spend its way out of the recession, Bush tried precisely that. The US Federal Reserve Board adopted a policy of low interest rates.

But the economy failed to respond. This, and deepening anxiety about the country's global competitiveness and the reality of a decaying infrastructure all began to make Bush massively unpopular.

His opponent in the Republican primaries, the extreme right populist Pat Buchanan, taunted Bush over his broken pledge of "no new taxes" and openly courted the racist vote. For all its vicious sound and fury Buchanan's campaign had little support in the US ruling class.

But his supporters extracted a high price for their endorsement of the Bush-Quayle ticket. They dictated a Republican platform which championed "family values", a code phrase for rabid homophobia and the elimination of all abortion rights.

The Bush campaign's emphasis on "family values" and trumpeting of America's new role as "the only superpower" fell increasingly on deaf ears amongst the middle class and the workers.

They compared what unlimited state intervention and spending could do in the military field with the disastrous results of low state spending and "hands off" economics at home.

Millions saw the appeal to "family values" as a sick con-trick to distract



But does America love George?

the voters from the economic issues.

All this served to rally support around the unlikely figure of Bill Clinton.

The problem is that neither Clinton's own record as Arkansas governor nor his choice of Al Gore as running mate can inspire confidence of a more progressive stance.

His Arkansas administration cannot lay claim to a single piece of civil rights legislation in twelve years. Arkansas does not provide state funding for abortions. Clinton has championed the death penalty, pointedly refusing to commute the death sentence of a mentally handicapped black man.

Every coded message put out by the Clinton campaign has served to distance him from the black working

class: his constant references to dole scroungers are a concession to white labour aristocratic racism which identifies blacks as the main recipients of benefits.

As well as deceitfully painting himself as a "progressive" Clinton has courted American big business with more success than any Democratic presidential candidate of the past 20 years.

The degree of corporate backing for Clinton suggests the start of a sea-change in ruling class strategy, compared to the Reagan/Bush years at least.

Clinton is not about to restore the tattered fabric of the always limited US welfare state. In fact he prides himself on being a pioneer of "workfare", a scheme which forces

the jobless, especially single mothers, into training schemes or low wage jobs to obtain benefits. His programme aims to cut public spending and expand the pool of cheap labour.

Clinton does not represent a 1990s version of Roosevelt's "New Deal", which used state spending and planning to get the USA out of the Great Depression.

He invokes nostalgia for Roosevelt and John F Kennedy while advocating a modest increase in central state intervention in the economy. In particular he wants an industrial policy for the USA, borrowed loosely from German and Japanese models. His emphasis is on forging new "partnerships between the private and public sectors" rather than substantial increases in state spending.

He has been happy to make the working class carry a heavier tax burden through increases in sales tax (VAT). He has dutifully maintained the state's low wage, anti-union climate and bashed Arkansas' teaching unions in the name of raising "educational standards".

On this score too, Clinton impresses the big bosses who are alarmed by Bush's abject failure as the "education president". The US ruling class has a genuine material interest in reversing falling standards and the inability of US high school graduates to compete with their overseas counterparts.

Clinton's modest proposals for a federally funded health insurance programme have also won a sympathetic ear from employers no longer willing to pay for union-negotiated medical plans. While he may not be the darling of the *Wall Street Journal* and although Perot accuses him of plotting to lead the US to socialism, saner elements in the US ruling class have been willing to trust him to oversee the task of a new phase of restructuring. Their aim is to preserve key gains of the Reagan era while compensating for some of its neglect of the physical and institutional infrastructure.

Where does the US working class stand? Many previous Democrat politicians have posed as "friends of labour". Not Clinton. He insists that, because of the planned free trade zone with Canada and Mexico, US workers will have to "price themselves into jobs". But this has not stopped the trade union bureaucracy from throwing its diminished weight behind Clinton.

Once again this leaves US workers with no alternative, a fact that will partly account for the high rate of abstention.

The absence of a working class political alternative contrasts with the continued willingness of US workers—from Pittsburgh delivery drivers to migrant California building workers—to wage bitter battles.

Los Angeles and the other spring uprisings highlighted that masses of black, Latino and white youth have had more than enough of the "American nightmare" and are prepared to fight for something very different.

The task remains for US revolutionaries to channel such immense bitterness into a consciously anti-capitalist party capable of placing working class needs and aspirations centre stage, breaking the bosses' political duopoly once and for all. The US workers need a workers' party, struggling not for a few more crumbs from the tables of the fabulously rich, but for the final reckoning with an imperialist superpower which can only grow more ugly and barbaric, at home and abroad, as its twilight approaches. ■

Brussels: 40,000 march against Euro-racism

OVER FORTY thousand young people marched through Brussels on 24 October in the first ever international demonstration against racism in Europe. It was a lively and militant demonstration, greeted warmly by the immigrant families in the tenements of Brussels.

The demonstration was organised by Youth Against Racism in Europe (YRE), an organisation initiated by the Militant and its fraternal organisations on the continent, but drew in much wider forces.

The official labour movements of Germany and Austria gave backing to the demo. At least ten coaches arrived from Berlin. Six arrived from Rostock, scene of an attempted pogrom by neo-Nazis in August. Many coaches from German working class towns were sponsored by trade unions such as IG-Metall (the engineers union) or öTV (the public sector union).

In addition to the massive presence of German speaking youth there were large contingents from Britain, Sweden, the Netherlands and Belgium. There was one coach each from Poland and Czechoslovakia, and, unfortunately given the level of neo-fascist activity, only one from France.

It was easy to see why there was such a massive response amongst German and Austrian youth. The defeated imperialisms of World War Two have peddled a kind of fake, official "anti-fascism" for forty years. Many have laws and even special police forces to combat fascism. But at the first major crisis all this

has been revealed as a facade.

German police stood by and did nothing as the far right mob besieged the immigrant hostel in Rostock. But they were on the ball when a group of Jewish activists staged a recent protest, quickly banging three away in jail for the crime of publicly protesting against growing official anti-Semitism.

Spontaneously local youth organisations of the SPD and PDS have transformed themselves into YRE branches. Local "antifa" groups have also signed up. It proves that millions of youth in Europe are sick of the rise of racism and the far right and are only waiting for the call from their moribund bureaucratic leaders to take to the streets against it.

Workers Power supporters joined a militant international contingent organised by the League for a Revolutionary Communist International, with comrades from France, Britain, Germany and Austria.

The LRCI distributed thousands of leaflets in English, French and German and sold considerable numbers of its publications, particularly in Germany.

Unfortunately most working class youth in Britain hardly knew the demo was taking place. The British delegation of around 400 was largely composed of members and support-

ers of Militant. Workers Power was the only other British group to participate in the delegation.

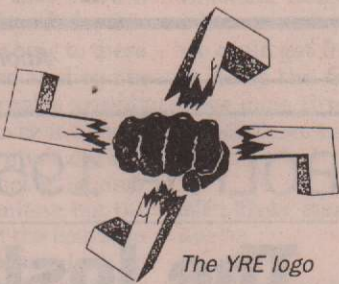
Though Militant in Britain went through the motions of raising support for the YRE in various labour movement bodies they made no attempt to build the demo as a genuine united campaign.

Up to now they have been content to build YRE as one of an ever increasing number of "party front" campaigns. Where are YRE's branches, conferences, democratic structures? They do not exist separate from Militant itself.

And while the central theme of the demo, spontaneously raised by even Social Democratic and Stalinist-led youth from the continent, was No Platform for Fascists, Militant has been notable by its absence from the fight to construct a workers' united front dedicated to smashing the fascists in Britain.

Such inconsistency, combined with the clear difference between the kind of broad united front built in Germany and Austria and Militant's work in Britain, must lead any subjective Trotskyist in Militant to question the direction of their organisation.

The Brussels' demo laid a solid basis for a Europe wide anti-fascist united front built on the basis of opposition to racism as well as fas-



The YRE logo

End of the Swedish model?

Dear comrades,

Sweden used to be the model country for reformists in the labour movement around the world. Staying out of World War Two under the slogan of "neutrality" proved very profitable. The Swedish bourgeoisie could sell to both sides and was able, after the war, to get a privileged position on the world market in certain highly specialised branches. The capitalists made big profits, living standards rose for the working class and the population in general, and the Social Democratic Party ruled in the interests of all!

This exceptional period has now come to an end. The sharpening of competition between the imperialist powers and the deepening economic crisis of capitalism on an international scale has made it necessary for the Swedish bosses to introduce heavy austerity measures.

The elections in 1991 shifted power from the Social Democrats to the openly bourgeois parties, under the leadership of the right wing Conservative Party. The parties mainly representing the petit bourgeoisie, the Centre Party, the People's Party and the Christian Democrats, are captives in a so-called right wing cage. Most of the special interests of their voters have

been crushed under the iron necessity of strengthening the competitiveness of Swedish capitalism.

During September big capital holders (more than 90% Swedish) forced the government to announce two packages of austerity measures. Interest rates were raised to figures unheard of (500%). This came after a period with rising unemployment, which reached figures not seen in Sweden since the 1930s, and ruthless cuts by local councils. Libraries, hospitals, all sorts of services have either been cut down or closed.

Instead of making a deal with New Democracy (as it had before), a populist party to the right of the government which is becoming more and more openly racist, the government offered the leaders of the Social Democrats the chance to "rescue the country from collapse".

As in every major challenge, the Swedish bourgeoisie could count on the reformist leaders. The first set of measures included some concessions to the Social Democrats, such as money for training schemes, a halt to privatisation of state owned firms and tax reductions, lowering of defence budgets etc.

These concessions were "bought" with reductions in the living standard of the workers: the age for retirement was raised by one year, payment for illness was removed for the first day and generally lowered, subsidies for housing were reduced, taxes on petrol and tobacco were raised, and aid to the "Third World" was lowered.

The second package included increased taxes on food and a two day reduction of paid holidays.

The government made a deal with the labour "leaders" and

achieved one thing that is priceless for the bosses: confusion and demoralisation among the workers. If the government had taken the same measures in their own name only, they would certainly have been met by strong and militant opposition from the rank and file, who would have dragged the leaders behind them. The Social Democrats stood at 46% in the polls and could easily have toppled the government and forced through new elections.

Opposition inside the unions had already been growing during last winter and spring, with militant demonstrations by building workers and others all over the country. Resentment against the new measures seemed to be strong in the unions, but the bureaucrats didn't do much besides advertising to get the members out on the streets.

As far as it is possible to judge

from participating in the protest in Stockholm and press reports from other places, the turn out was not exceptional, no more than can usually be mobilised on May Day demonstrations. In Stockholm, with 500,000 trade unionists, no more than 20,000 came out on the streets. All in all, there were 200 different places where protests by sometimes angry and militant workers took place.

The only union to take strike action was the dock workers' union which is outside the TUC (LO), which closed most of the ports for an hour. The cab drivers also struck during the day of protest.

What is needed in the Swedish working class movement today is the bringing together of those workers who are willing to fight, and they definitely exist in greater numbers than a couple of years ago. Their weakness is the lack of political perspective. They need an action programme that spells out how the most burning tasks can be solved in the interests of working people. Militant workers need to find the way to bring the great mass of workers with them.

That is the great task which Swedish revolutionaries must face.

Yours fraternally
Per-Olof Mattsson
Stockholm

UCATT cover-up

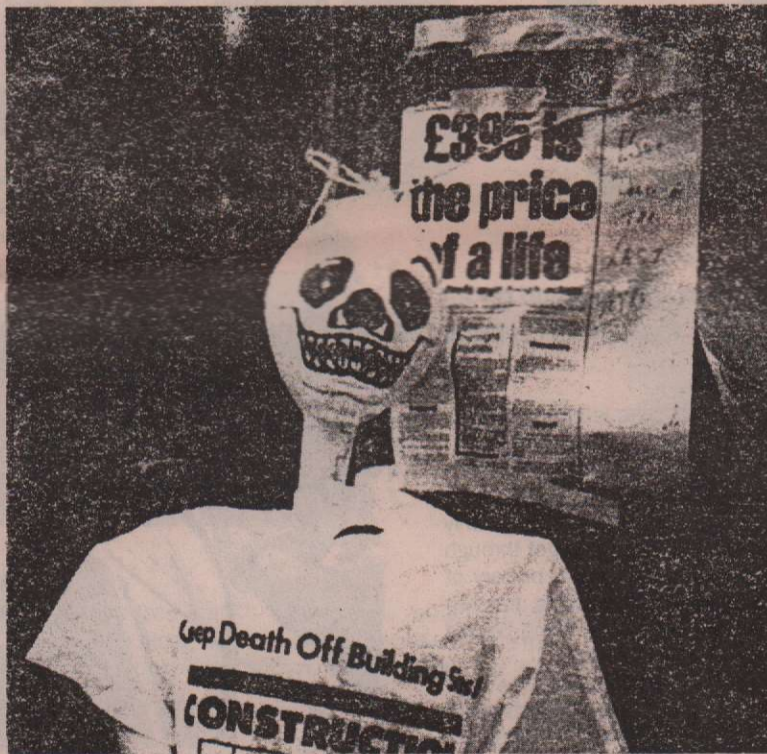
We have received the following letter, which we have had to shorten, from Brian Higgins, Secretary of UCATT Branch No. UF 214, Northampton and a supporter of the rank and file paper, Building Worker.

It refers to the fall-out following an edition of Channel 4's programme *Dispatches*, entitled "The Ballot Fixers", which exposed corruption and undemocratic practices within UCATT and which implicated the union's Executive Council.

Following the programme, which was broadcast on 8 May 1991, Brother Higgins' branch submitted evidence to a nominally independent inquiry conducted by lawyers. Documents sent to us by Brother Higgins explain how the lawyers receive all of their information and funding via the Executive Council, and that they have absolute control over what is revealed to the membership.

The report has not been published to date, despite the fact that as far back as 20 August the General Secretary of UCATT, George Brumwell, wrote to the Northampton branch explaining that the report was being checked for libellous remarks. How long does that really take?

We completely endorse Brother Higgins' call for the leadership of the union to be held to account. Building a rank and file movement across the construction industry is the best way to do this.



Site safety depends on unions free of corruption

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I have been asked by this union branch to write to you in an attempt to enlist your paper's support in our campaign to expose and break open the disgraceful cover-up of ballot rigging and corruption, and those responsible for it, which is going on in UCATT under the guise of "The UCATT Inquiry" and subsequent "Hand Report".

With three building workers a week, on average, still being killed in so called site accidents in a vastly reduced workforce in the building industry, and the industry in such an appalling state and with site union organisation the worst in living memory, the condition of by far the largest construction union is of great importance in this horrendous scenario.

All [the information in the letters and bulletin attached] shows that the leadership of this union and thus the union itself, unless rectified, is in an almost terminal state of organisational and political degeneration. With the resultant consequences for the present state, and indeed future, of

the industry and more importantly the workers in it.

We state categorically that it will take strong democratic site union organisation and representation to start to counter and fightback against the horrendous state of the construction industry.

But we also know that there can be no strong democratic site organisation unless the unions in the construction industry, in particular UCATT, are themselves democratic. And that means unions free of corrupt and grossly undemocratic practices, rules and personnel.

We are fighting against this corruption, lack of democracy and severe degeneration in UCATT. But we now desperately need and ask for the support of your paper in this, at present, vastly unequal struggle. Please help us tip the balance in favour of our principled stand and fight.

To the best of our knowledge, not one rank and file member and very few full time officials have seen, let alone been sent a copy of "The Hand Report". Yet copies were extensively leaked to the press. The so-called libel reading was but one more delaying and covering tactic.

Recently this union branch moved votes of no confidence in the General Secretary, EC and the "The UCATT Inquiry" and "The Hand Report". We based our decision on what we had read in the union's newspaper *The Viewpoint*. We have also charged under union rules Brumwell as General Secretary, P Lenihan, R Doel, J Flavin and C Kelly with acting against the interests of the union. We have had to charge them as individual members of the union as the rule book does not allow for charges against the EC.

If those responsible for the vile corruption in UCATT get away with it, then the consequences for all building workers will be incalculable and should be measured in the numbers of dead and seriously injured building workers. Yes, in construction the price of corruption is very high.

Yours fraternally,
B Higgins,
Secretary,
UCATT
Northampton Branch UF 214

A day in the life . . .

Dear Workers Power,

The day the ERM collapsed has been labelled Black Wednesday by the press. But in John Major's classless society not everybody had a bad day on 16 September.

Consider the case of two typical Londoners, me and "ace foreign exchange dealer" George Soros, who gave his account of the day's events in *Forbes*, the rich person's magazine (quoted in the *Independent*).

■ 9am: I go to the dole to sign on, return home with about £2.50 left out of £84 income support. The next Giro arrives on Friday.

□ George Soros starts work on the London foreign exchange market. He borrows Sterling and uses it to buy German Marks. George Soros starts the day with one billion dollars to play with and, reportedly, borrows \$7 billion worth of sterling.

Then he buys £300 million worth of shares, "in the knowledge that the stock market often rises after a currency devaluation".

■ 7pm: I watch Lamont on TV announce the suspension of ERM membership as the markets wipe out 12% of the value of the £2.50 in my pocket.

□ George Soros starts to buy sterling again at 12% cheaper than in the morning, pays off what he borrowed, plus interest, and pockets the difference. The next day he sells his shares. The total profit runs to a cool £1 billion.

George Soros told *Forbes* magazine "If I didn't do it, someone else would have done".

Dammit, I thought when I read this; why didn't I do it instead?

Yours
D Finlay
Southwark

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No Asylum Bill! No immigration controls!

"GOOD RACE relations and a healthy sense of community in our society depend on an effective system of strict immigration controls", declared that master of cynical double-speak Kenneth Clarke, the Tory Home Secretary.

He was unveiling the Tories' latest attempt to stoke up racism and keep out the "foreign hordes": the Asylum and Immigration Bill.

This is a new version of the Bill which the Tories had to withdraw in the last session of Parliament—but only because they ran out of time. Roy Hattersley, then Deputy Leader of the Labour Party, offered support for the Bill if the Tories granted minor concessions.

The Bill was used in the last election as part of a campaign to show that the Tories were "tough on immigration" and to hammer home the idea that floods of fraudulent refugees were just waiting to pour into Britain.

It was originally introduced with the argument that the number of asylum seekers was rising by leaps and bounds. The Tories warned Parliament that the figures had risen to a projected 57,000 in 1991. In fact the figures never reached their "projections". Only 44,000 applications

were made in 1991. And this year the figure, far from rising, is expected to fall by half!

This has not stopped the Tories from using the same old racist arguments about "floods of foreigners" who have to be stopped from entry.

The so-called "concessions" made to the parliamentary opposition are hardly even cosmetic. All applicants for asylum are now supposedly given right of appeal. Previously they were to be sent back without it. But some groups of asylum seekers will still be given only 48 hours to appeal, with only a quick verbal inquiry.

Others will be allowed a "generous" twelve days to seek legal advice and help. And this for people who have often been brutalised, tortured and just landed in the country unable to speak a word of English. Previously Clarke wanted to deny them legal aid as well! While he still declared at the press conference on the Bill that this idea "had

some merits", he is not at the moment pushing it.

In any case, the right to quick appeal at the point of entry which Clarke now boasts about is only available for those that get through the government's other battery of measures, such as levying massive fines on airlines that bring people without proper papers.

The Bill still contains the proposal for compulsory finger printing and denial of council housing for those waiting to be given leave to stay. The whole Bill reeks of what it is, a racist measure designed to intimidate, deter and degrade would be refugees fleeing from persecution in their own countries.

The new Asylum and Immigration Bill even adds further restrictions on immigrants' families. Up to now, there has been a right of appeal for the immediate family and relations of immigrants who are refused a temporary visitor's permit to attend a funeral or wedding. Last year 2,000 people, 20% of those refused, had their cases upheld. This is obviously too much for the Tories, so they intend to abolish this right as well!

The Asylum Bill, along with all other immigration controls, must be smashed. All capitalist immigration laws are racist. They are used to divide the working class along racial lines and place the blame for lack of housing, poor health services, unemployment and overcrowded schools on "the foreigners" rather than on the bosses, their system and their government.

The Bill will be used by the racists



and fascists as an excuse to step up attacks on the black community across Britain. Two out of the seven racist murders committed this year have been on refugees.

A mass movement needs to be built to defeat this Bill. We need to take the arguments into the trade unions. Anti-Asylum Bill committees

must be set up, drawing in refugee and immigrant organisations, student unions, and black organisations alongside the labour movement. We must argue for mass demonstrations and strike action at every stage of the Bill in Parliament. The racists must be forced to back down!■

THEY SHALL NOT PASS!

Stop the NF March

MASS DEMONSTRATION

Year after year the National Front have held a parade on Remembrance Sunday, marching from Victoria to the Cenotaph where they lay a wreath. As part of the European fightback against fascism we must stop the NF in their tracks!

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