

Workers power

MONTHLY PAPER OF THE WORKERS' POWER GROUP

2 million unemployed; £2b cuts; 10pc wage cut

TIME TO TURN THE TIDE

The Tories and the employers are sharpening their knives for even more savage attacks on the jobs and living standards of all working people.

The Cabinet is set on pushing through new cuts to the tune of £2 billion. They are making no secret of the fact that their plans include cuts in the real value of welfare and pension benefits. The multi-housed millionaire Heseltine has declared a freeze on new council house construction.

Thatcher and Joseph are standing firm behind a series of provocative and insulting pay offers—from Leyland and from the NCB.

To 'cure' inflation they intend to pay these workers at least 10% below the official rate of inflation. Indeed throughout the public sector an 'incomes policy' is on the stocks aimed at limiting rises to 6%-8%.

Geoffrey Howe has made clear his intentions to stand firm and push the numbers on the dole relentlessly up towards the 3 million mark.

They must be stopped NOW! If their plans are not smashed then more and more working class communities will be forced to subsist on shrinking dole and welfare payments. Leyland workers, who have had only 5% wage increases for 2 years and lost thousands of jobs (the Longbridge work force is now only 15,000 strong compared with 25,000 in the early 70s) will have to survive on wages that won't even foot their rent and food bills. Half a million youth will never have earned a regular wage or taken their place in the ranks of organised labour. The trade unions will be shackled by Prior's Employment Act and his codes of conduct.

The Tories are confident and know exactly what they are doing. They have taken new heart from the craven capitulation of the AUEW leaders who have buckled under an 8% pay offer without a fight. Their confidence grows as the do-nothing Labour leaders confront the Tories with pathetic speeches and pleadings to see sense but refuse to organise to resist the Tory Government now.

Their CBI backers are clamouring for more blood. The only difference between the CBI chiefs and Thatcher is that they want the burd-

en on the employers eased by lower interest rates and for the Government to foot the bill for that with more cuts in public spending than even Thatcher and the Treasury have plans for.

The next months will be acritical point in the struggle between the working class and this Tory government. The forces prepared to do battle with Thatcher are shaping up. The Tories will doubtless have been taken by surprise by the strike votes of the mass meetings at Cowley and at Longbridge. The Gardners occupation, if carried through resolutely to victory, can change the mood and confidence of all workers fighting redundancy and short time working decisively. The potential exists in the NUM to rip up the NCB's

insulting offer and taken on the government to protect wages and jobs. The 1000 delegates and observers who attended the Lambeth conference showed the potential for galvanising and centralising the struggle against the public service cuts.

The trade union leaders, as they did in the steel strike, will try to leave these sectors isolated, to be taken on separately by the Tory government. The TUC can be relied on to attempt to defuse the potential for a generalised offensive. Duffy is brazenly considering breaking ranks with the T&GWU workers in Leyland. Gormley has been calling for calm and patience from the miners trying to lull them into false confidence and stymie all preparation for strike action. The 'Left' Labour NEC has refused to guarantee full backing to all Labour Councils refusing to implement the cuts, they have failed to mobilise the Party to defy the Tory spending cuts.

At present no alternative leadership exists on a sufficient scale to pull together those rank and file militants prepared to do battle, foil the plans of the TUC leaders and coordinate a working class offensive. The campaign against Prior's Employment Act showed quite how withered is the industrial base of the CP led LCDTU and the SWP's

BRITISH WORKERS MUST FORCE TORIES

TO Meet hunger strike demands in full

"We the Republican Prisoners of War in H-Block Long Kesh demand as of right political recognition and that we be accorded the status of political prisoners. We claim this right as captured combatants in the continuing struggle for National liberation and self-determination." With these words on October 27th seven prisoners of British Imperialism in Ireland started a hunger strike against the inhumane conditions forced on them by the British state.

Like all ruling classes threatened by a just struggle to throw off national oppression, the British Government and its obedient media machine has set out to 'criminalise' and break the resistance of its opponents just as it did in the past in Malaya, Cyprus, Kenya, Aden and numerous other colonies.

The fact that the Republicans held in the Maze were political prisoners not criminals was recognised by the Tory Government in 1972 when they were forced to concede 'special category status' in the face of mass demonstrations and riots in the north. This allowed prisoners convicted for political offences to wear their own clothes and organise their own education and recreation.

To its lasting infamy it was the Labour Government which withdrew this status in 1976. This was part of a deliberate policy—hopes of a political settlement based on power sharing had been abandoned. Merlyn Rees and Roy Mason spearheaded the new tactic, which is carried on by their Tory friends today, involving increased repression and a military victory over the 'terrorists'. To ensure this new policy caused as little protest in Britain as possible it was necessary to remove anything that might indicate that a war was going on in Ireland—it was necessary to brand the Republican resistance as 'criminal' and 'terrorist' violence.

'Internment without trial', only possible to justify in the extremes of a war situation, was replaced by the juryless Diplock Courts and confessions extracted by the RUC thugs. Unlike normal courts where threats or inducements are at least formally sufficient to invalidate a 'confession', in the Diplock courts full scale torture has to be proved. There is little wonder then that of the 94% 'success rate' for convictions in these courts 90% are based on 'confessions'. The widespread torture and brutality used to gain these confessions, exposed by numerous enquiries, are clearly policy of the RUC to which the Government gives its sanction.

What is at issue here is not primarily a humanitarian question of the harsh treatment of prisoners, but is about the rights of prisoners of war, incarcerated for fighting British Imperialism. British trade union and labour leaders will often put their names to petitions protesting the incarceration of political prisoners in South Africa and elsewhere, but they remain silent on the H-block question.

In the past the republicans have, driven to desperation by the silence of the British labour movement—indeed the bloody complicity of its leaders in repression in Ireland—carried out bombings in Birmingham and London, actions which only assist the Labour/Tory propaganda. To avoid these self-defeating acts British workers must break their silence and complicity and mobilise in support of the hunger strikers demand. We must not let the Tories murder them. We must go further and demand British Troops Out of Ireland Now Let the Irish People as a whole decide the fate of the 6 Counties



Above and below: Anger and confidence at Brighton in September.

PHOTOS: JohnSturrock (Report)

out of work. It will strengthen the resolve of workers to defy the attempts of management to force down wage claims through the blackmail of redundancy threats. The mounting numbers of youth on the dole will be ignored by organised workers at their own peril. Unless the trade union movement takes immediate action on behalf of these young workers increasing numbers of them will fall into the clutches of the murderous fascist thug squads or to cynicism, demoralisation and fatalism as inflation drives down the value of their benefits.

For an unemployed workers movement—register the unemployed in the unions, for Trade Union control of hiring and firing, cut the hours with no loss of pay, force the bosses to take on young workers.

We must demand that existing rank and file bodies claiming to represent a coordinated fightback—the Communist Party dominated LCDTU and the SWP's Defend Our Union Committee—hold a joint democratically run conference of shop floor organisations where such policies can be debated out. The Lambeth delegate conference made a sharp contrast, with its many resolutions, amendments and open debate, to the take it or leave it declarations and manipulative platforms of CP's and SWP's 'rank and file' conferences.

The forces exist to smash the Tory offensive, to stop them drawing more blood. In the crucial months ahead those fighting—on wages, on cuts, on jobs,—must be welded together for a General Strike which can smash this Tory offensive.



In our last two issues, Workers Power showed how the crisis of the East European economies — a product of bureaucratic dictatorship, mismanagement and their historic isolation — led inevitably to revolts by the working class. We pointed out that independent workers organisations of any sort, trade union or political, could not long co-exist with the Stalinist Dictatorship. We argued that the present Solidarnosc leadership — Walesa and the KOR intellectuals Kuron and Michnik — were opposed to the only way the workers can avoid a crushing defeat at the hands of the Polish and Kremlin bureaucrats — by making a Political Revolution. In this article Dave Hughes argues that two self-pro

editorial

Break PLP Control! Conference Must Elect Leader

The Parliamentary Labour Party has chosen to treat the decision of the Blackpool Conference with contempt. This is a rush to pre-emptively elect a leader who they hope to foist on the special conference by a mixture of threats and the right wing union leaders block votes. The Tribune lefts have played the whole affair with their usual mixture of verbal fireworks and a failure to stand up to the right. The NEC was right to call on the PLP not to elect a leader. Tony Benn was right not to stand in this UDI election. But none of them have taken any step, via the NEC, to call these arrogant hijackers of the working class' mandate, to order. The NEC should have

(1) Made it clear that they would not recognise as Party leader anyone other than the deputy leader and him only in a caretaker capacity. Foot should have been required to tender his resignation at the opening of the January Conference;
(2) Called on all MPs loyal to the conference decisions to boycott this sham election. The NEC's failure to take these measures merely emboldened the right wing bulk of the PLP who brazenly threaten the party with a split. The lefts will use, as an excuse for their pusillanimity, the need to preserve party unity. This wretched argument is the source of their impotence.

Healey and his backers, Williams, Owen, Rogers, Rees, Mason, have no such scruples. Confident of the total backing of their class (the bosses), expressed via the braying and howling of the Sun, the Express, the Mail, and the more genteel tones of the Guardian they are set on inflicting defeat on the struggle for the democratisation of the party. The left are already showing signs of shell-shock. They are supporting Foot as a PLP leadership candidate despite his statement that he wouldn't be a temporary leader.

Let us be clear—Foot's record, even as a 'Left talker' stinks. He was Callaghan's right hand man in, fixing up with the union bosses, the mark II (IMF) social contract that cut workers wages, social services and gave us 1½ million unemployed. He supervised the stitching up of the Lib-Lab pact in Parliament and gave his blessing to the use of troops to break the firemen's strike. Since Labour's fall from office he has not uttered a word of repentance. Indeed he has continued to defend the 74-79 Government's shabby record. He does not promise any new policies. He has not clearly and unambiguously declared his submission to the will of the Conference. He is not on record as supporting any reform programme that will break the MPs decisive control over the election of the leader. His Gladstonian speech on unemployment with its 'witty' in-jokes that served as such delightful entertainment for the Tories was an insult to the two million unemployed.

The Guardian (November 1st) reports that "The Labour Left is shifting towards conceding a dominant role to the Parliamentary Labour Party, probably as much as 50% of the votes". The dubious credit for pioneering this proposal goes to the ILP (Independent Labour Publications) backed Leeds South proposition (50% PLP, 25% unions, 20% to constituencies, 5% other affiliated organisations). Headlined, in 'Labour Leader' 'Compromise or be Damned' it would have been better called 'Compromise and be Damned.' The position of revolutionaries in the Labour Party and the unions should be clear. The PLP has no democratic right to be represented by a special block in the electoral college. As members of their constituencies or affiliated unions they should have the same vote as any other member.

Workers Power believes that the Conference itself should elect the party leader. This would not be the end of democratisation in the unions and the constituencies but only the beginning. The MPs 'confidence' in such a leader is neither here nor there. The PLP's actions in the House of Commons should be directed by Conference resolutions and by the NEC. An MP who has no confidence in the policies of the movement that put him or her there should get out and make way for someone who does. The MPs who claim to 'represent' their constituencies electorate as against their local party and the local affiliated unions should consider how many of them would have been elected as independents on their own policies with no party and union workers behind them. Not one of them! They were elected as Labour candidates. Without this endorsement they would have been seen for the third rate bosses men they are and would not have collected more than a few hundred crank votes.

To those who say the block vote would give the union bureaucrats the decisive voice we say, yes indeed, and that is why the union vote is the key section that needs to be made accountable. As a first step the 'block' system i.e. unitary casting of the whole affiliated memberships votes must be abolished. Union Conferences and where they exist (as in the AUEW) lay delegate National Committees should vote on proposals and the unions vote cast in proportion to the views of the delegates. But even this—given the bureaucratized nature of the unions is still not enough. Jackson, Basnett and Co blocked the NEC's proposals at Blackpool on the hypocritical plea that they had to "consult their memberships". We must force them to do just this—on a permanent basis. The union vote will never be democratic until the political levy paying members can meet, in every workplace, can have the arguments, vote on resolutions and mandates their representatives. Only by thus asserting the right of the rank and file to control the block vote at every level can the big union bosses be prevented from guaranteeing PLP and right wing rule in the Labour Party. There should be no bans or political proscriptions excluding members of any working class or socialist organisation who pay the levy.

Given the present alignment of forces in the party it will be up to the rank and file to fight for such measures. They may have to vote for measures in the interim which fall short of this. But it must be a principle that no measure which gives the PLP a veto or a decisive voice is supportable. Indeed given the fact that it will legitimise Healey (or Foot) as leader and as a 'new' system will be difficult to remove in the foreseeable future it is actual worse than the existing system. It gives 'participation' and 'consultation' to the rank and file without giving them power.

claimed Trotskyist organisations — The American Socialist Workers Party and the International Spartacist Tendency — fail to offer a strategy for such a revolution.



The analysis of the Polish events and the strategy for political revolution is an acid test for those claiming to stand in the tradition of Leon Trotsky. Two such bodies are the American Socialist Workers Party (prevented by reactionary legislation from affiliation to the United Secretariat of the Fourth International) and the International Spartacist Tendency. These groupings start out from opposite positions, the SWP from an opportunist one, the Spartacists from a sectarian one. But both end up unable to offer a programme for political revolution or elaborate tactics for facing the Stalinist bureaucracy in today's struggles.

The SWP's approach to Poland is of a piece with their position on Iran and Nicaragua (see Workers Power nos. 15 and 10). They surrender all the tasks of revolutionary leadership to the existing leaders under the pretext that the objective process makes for socialism. These advocates of the "Leninist Strategy of Party Building" have no use for such a party precisely during a revolution. The strike wave has, of course, an objective logic, as a struggle against inequality and political oppression that opens the road to destroying the political rule of the bureaucracy and introducing genuine workers' democracy and workers' management of the economy. But its objective content has meant that it can be led by those who see it as a mechanism to achieve reforms within the existing crisis-wracked system.

THREAT OF REACTION

Confusing the objective potential of the strike wave with its subjective content, the SWP deliberately write out of the situation the threat of reactionary leadership taking firm root in the mass movement. Whether the leadership takes the form of Polish nationalists, dupes of reactionary cardinals or social democratic intellectuals, the SWP doesn't give a damn. It has already designated this profoundly contradictory movement a struggle for socialism and workers' democracy.

"The great battles of August and the first days of September have shown who the real leaders of the Polish workers are—those who led them in the struggle, those who organised them to fight for their interests and those of the entire society, those who are leading them forward in the fight for genuine workers' democracy and socialism". (Inter-continental, 15.9.80).

Fortunately the Polish workers have already begun to have serious doubts about Walesa's intransigence—doubts which a Trotskyist should seek to give clear expression to. The SWP gave such a whole-hearted endorsement to Walesa and Co. because they have no revolutionary programme for Poland. If you have only a programme of democratic reforms then reformists (Catholics, nationalists, social democrats) will do quite nicely.

In place of the political revolution the SWP offer a perspective of democratic reforms.

"But in Poland the workers are showing that the only way to 'rationalise' the economy so that it can meet the needs of the masses of the people is through the struggle to expand democracy" (Inter-continental, 22.9.80).

But marxists have always understood that the slogan of 'democracy' was vacuous unless it was given class content. Democracy of who, for whom? That is the method of revolutionary marxists. Proletarian democracy can be achieved only by a revolution against the bureaucracy's political rule not through a peaceful transformation of the political apparatus. And proletarian democracy guarantees, in advance, only the rights of those who defend state property, and a commitment to socialist transformation on the basis of that property, not of those who will fight to restore capitalism or the parasitical rule of the Stalinists. To pose the struggle for democracy in any other way is to parrot the bourgeois ideologists and their admirers in Poland, when the key task is precisely to organise the workers for their own democracy against those who will direct their struggle into either a reformist or a consciously reactionary crusade.

The SWP's reform project is advanced as an objective process that the forces of reaction are powerless to prevent.

"The development of workers' self-organisation, even under the syndicalist form of workers' commissions or shop delegates, cannot help but pose the question of the workers right to control the management of their factories. From there it is only a single step to demand democratically centralised self-management of the entire country."

But opportunists, flinching from the task of fighting for a marxist programme and leadership, have always pleaded objective circumstances, the "march of history" as their pretext and excuse. Behind the SWP's talk of an objective process propelling Poland towards workers' democracy lies an abandonment of the two key elements of the Trotskyist programme

MAXIMUM USELESS

for the Stalinist States - the revolutionary party and the political revolution to institute proletarian democracy.

If the SWP have uncritically rushed to embrace the strike movement and its present leadership the sectarians of the International Spartacist Tendency (IST) have all but turned their back on it. This position has its origins in their perspective of an Imperialist war drive against the USSR which dominates (and grotesquely distorts) their whole world view. In this view the fanatical mullahs of South-West Asia (Khomeini and the Afghan rebels) Pope Wojtyla and Cardinal Wyszynski are all part of a reactionary clerical crusade (or jihad) against the USSR. The sight of Walesa kissing his over-sized crucifix or the shipyard workers on their knees before catholic priests sets all the bells ringing in the Spartacist belfry. With the (fanatical, catholic, Pole) Brzezinski directing it all from the White House the Polish workers are obviously dupes of an "anti-soviet plot" or worse.

Workers Vanguard, despite a passing reference to its "justified grievances", show scant sympathy for Poland's proletariat. They are "demanding the biggest free lunch the world has ever seen". (Workers Vanguard no.263). The Spartacists offer a visit to Liverpool as a cure for "strike leaders who yearn for capitalism" (W.V. no.263), ignoring the fact that they would find more Polish ham there than in Lodz or Warsaw. We assume that the Spartacists are using the good old (Stalinist) argument that "things are much worse under capitalism". The alternatives, the

As we go to press the American electorate go to the polls to decide who will be "the most powerful man on earth". The tawdry star-spangled rhetoric of the campaign will quietly recede into history as the new incumbent of the White House faces up to his class responsibilities of tackling recession at home and restoring confidence in American imperialism abroad.

At first sight there may not seem to be a hairs breadth of difference between the Carter and Reagan band wagons yet Time Magazine in its pre-election issue can refer to the "clear cut and contrasting choices" offered in the Reagan and Carter candidacies. On closer inspection these differences do reflect the divisions within the US bourgeoisie and its parties in developing policies to tackle the problems of American capitalism. With falling productivity, 8 million unemployed, inflation running at 13% and a massive \$60 deficit on the Federal budget, American big business has been pressing for "radical" measures to improve profitability and stimulate growth. Reagan and his big business Republican backers represent a new clearer and more brazenly expressed version of this strategy for the bourgeoisie. This pressure led Carter further and further from his 1977 promises of increased social spending and a policy of detente with the Russians.

BREAK FROM CONCENSUS

Reagan's policies are a clear break from the traditional consensus politics of Republicans and Democrats sympathetic to Friedmanite monetarist policies, he is one of only three honary fellows of the rabidly right wing Hoover Institution (founded to "demonstrate the evil of the doctrines of Karl Marx") which has been rallying right wing economists and intellectuals against what they like to put over as the "New Deal Liberalism" and "Welfareism" of the Democrats. Underpinning Reagan's approach is a fanatical belief in the values of traditional American capitalism. His campaign message that "America must once again become the land of the free" and that "Government must get out of business and the lives of decent Americans" is an open appeal to let market forces rip. Reagan stands on a platform of tax cuts—he aims to cut \$53 billion from taxes over five years—while aiming to increase defence expenditure even above Carter's projected increase of 3% in real terms. While hoping to win the votes of the middle class with these promises of "restoring incentive" through tax cuts the major tax relief will of course go to the big corporations to increase their profitability.

They also mean slashing the meagre welfare programmes for the poor and unemployed in the cities. Reagan combines this programme for capitalist revival with overt appeals to racism in his defence of "states rights" i.e. the rights of southern states to continue their racist practices without Federal interference, opposition to abortion and women's rights and with staunch defence of the anti-union "right to work" laws of many states.

All these policies have a familiar "Thatcherite" ring about them and indeed American capitalism faces many of the same problems—

AND MINIMUM PROGRAMMES FOR POLITICAL REVOLUTION

Spartacists say, are "proletarian political revolution against the Stalinist bureaucracy or capitalist counter-revolution led by Pope Wojtyla's church". Thus "If the settlement strengthens the working class organisationally, it also strengthens the forces of reaction. Poland stands today on a razor's edge". (W.V.no.263).

The Spartacists ignore the fact that the forces aligned against each other in Poland today are the workers organised in Solidarnosc, and Kania and Co, with Brezhnev and the Kremlin behind him. Nowhere do the Spartacists warn of the danger of Russian intervention - 100 times more immediate a threat than that Carter or Reagan would send in the marines. And without imperialist willingness to break (militarily) the fundamental agreements on "spheres" of influence reached in Yalta and Potsdam, neither the Catholic Church nor the peasantry will move to overthrow state property in Poland. Nor is there any evidence whatsoever that Poland's workers desire such an outcome. If the workers steadfastly defend their union's newly won independence, then sooner or later Brezhnev's tanks will roll in as they did in Hungary and Czechoslovakia. They will claim, indeed are already claiming, that "socialism" is threatened in Poland. Where will the Spartacists stand then? Will they support the "defence of socialism" by Russian tanks? Such a position would be as monstrous a travesty of Trotskyism as the SWP(US)'s abandonment of the political revolution. In fact the Spartacists' "political revolution" is an abstraction. For them, "soviets led by Bolsh



eviks" must spring fully fledged into the world. If not, then they are counter-revolutionary instruments as against which the Soviet Armed Forces (the 'Red Army' as they misname it), is the preferable option.

We do not deny that the legitimate struggles of the workers for their rights to speak and to organise can be utilised by elements who wish to use the forms of bourgeois democracy to restore capitalism. That is a direct legacy of the Stalinist political dictatorship over the working class, of the Stalinists' complete

negation of workers' democracy. Likewise no-one can deny the potential carnival of reaction that could be unleashed by a Polish nationalist movement in the hands of the priests and reactionaries. The ruthless repression of the Belorussians, the Ukrainians and the Left in the "independent" Poland of the 1930s shows us that; but the imposition of the Stalinist bureaucratic regime on Poland and its maintenance in power by the Soviet bureaucracy means that Stalinists themselves are responsible ultimately

for fuelling and stoking the flames of nationalism and that it is their responsibility that millions of Polish workers feel that the bureaucratic regime is the result of their national oppression. It is precisely that sense of national oppression that explains the ability of the Catholic Church to channel and even speak in the name of an aroused and militant working class. The Catholic hierarchy has been able to identify itself not only with the cause of the small holding peasants but also with the genuine aspirations for independence felt by the proletarians themselves.

None of this is new in the history of Stalinism. Trotsky analysed the results of the national oppression of the Ukrainians within the USSR in the late 1930s. He saw that this was capitalised on by clerical reaction and right wing nationalists.

"When the Ukrainian problem became aggravated early this year, communist voices were not heard at all; but the voices of the Ukrainian clericals and National Socialists were loud enough. This means that the proletarian vanguard has let the Ukrainian national movement slip out of its hands and that this movement has progressed far on the road of separatism". (Independence of the Ukraine and Sectarian Muddleheads: Writings 1939-40, p.47).

To those who threw up their hands in horror at the leadership of the movement and accordingly left the masses to the mercy of those leaders Trotsky had this to say:

"The great masses of the Ukrainian people are dissatisfied with their national fate and wish to change it drastically. It is this fact that the revolutionary politician must, in contrast to the bureaucrat and the sectarian, take as his point of departure" (ibid, pp.47-48).

In the struggle against bureaucratic privilege and oppression we can have no doubt that previously silenced reactionaries will crawl out of the woodwork. Our task is to expose those reactionaries for what they are and thus pave the way for a decisive struggle with the bureaucracy. The majority of Polish workers are profoundly dissatisfied with their social, political and national rights. We must ensure that communists, not reactionaries, give full expression to the grievances of the masses and advance the only programme that can meet their needs. Thus one demand of the political revolution must be for an independent Soviet (ie, workers council), Poland free of Soviet troops and the Warsaw Pact but pledged to unconditional defence of the USSR against imperialist attacks.

A FREE LUNCH

For the Spartacists, however, the principal task is to direct the masses against clerical reaction. As a result they take no account of the legitimate struggles of the KOR to defend the rights of Free Trade Union activists - they never called for their release from Gierek's jails and instead advised a short stint in Afghanistan to cure the KOR activists of anti-sovietism!! To the masses opposition to a Russian sponsored regime, they can only reply that these heavily subsidised workers are after a free lunch!

The Polish workers' allegiance to the Catholic Church, like that of the workers and peasants of Ireland, is contradictory. The hierarchy has never fought in their interests and failed to do so in the August strike wave. The workers refused to obey the hierarchy's calls for order and a return to work. It is on that contradiction between formal allegiance but practical disobedience in struggle that we must build. Lenin always understood that in combating religious prejudice amongst the masses, the task was not to simply deliver rationalist lectures against the preposterous myths of the Christian Church but to struggle to break up its material base.

"A marxist must be a materialist, ie, an enemy of religion, but a dialectical materialist, ie, one who treats the struggle against religion not in an abstract way, not on the basis of remote, purely theoretical never varying preaching way, but in a concrete way, on the basis of the class struggle which is going on in practice and is educating the masses more and better than anything else could" (Lenin: On Religion, p.23)

For the Spartacists, on the other hand, the task is to denounce the clerics - fine, call for the separation of church and state - fine, but that means no more than defending the present Polish constitution, and to set out to destroy the material base of Catholicism through the call for the collectivisation of agriculture. And who is to carry out this programme? On this the Spartacists are silent but in the present context it can mean no more than a call on the Polish Stalinists to rediscover the vigour of their Stalinist predecessors and drive the peasants back into collective farms. None of this confronts the real problem of breaking illusions in the hierarchy amongst the only class that can offer a revolutionary alternative to the rule of the bureaucracy - the working class.

The workers of Poland are locked in battle with the Stalinists set on breaking their new organisations. In that struggle the Catholic hierarchy will play a poisonous role, the KOR intellectuals will seek for compromise and delay and Walesa has already proved himself to be a treacherous conciliator with Bishop and bureaucrat alike. Our task is to fight for a programme that maintains the advances made by the workers; prepares for decisive struggle to oust the bureaucrats and ensures that struggles for democracy and national rights result in proletarian democracy and in a Poland committed to defending the stifled economies from imperialist attack while free from the yoke of the counter-revolutionary Warsaw Pact. Such a political revolution would become a rallying point for the oppressed masses in the Stalinist states and a basis for developing the programme, and significantly augmenting the forces of, revolutionary Trotskyism. Opportunists and sectarians have no positive role to play in that struggle.

Carter or Reagan? A choice for bosses, not for workers!

if not yet on so serious a scale as Britain. This comes out most clearly in Reagan's determination to "safeguard America's interests" abroad. Outbidding Carter in drumming up the "cold war" fever, Reagan has made it clear that he would escalate the arms race to force Russia to renegotiate the Salt agreements—increasing America's lead in annihilation capability still further.

The defeats and setbacks for American imperialism in Indo-China, Nicaragua and Iran have led to Reagan's demands for America to increase its military strength and deploy it more frequently—he was in favour of a blockade of Cuba in retaliation for the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and advocated the use of US troops in Zimbabwe to ensure the Lancaster House Settlement turned out most favourably to US and British imperialism.

This does not mean that Carter and the Democratic Party offers anything significantly different for the American working class. Carter is however limited in the speed and degree that he can travel down the path of welfare cuts by the client groupings that make up the Democratic Party. Traditionally drawings its electoral support from blue collar workers, blacks, hispanics and other minority groups the democrats via the trade union bureaucrats and community "leaders" offer the possibility of reconciling these groups to cuts in living standards with the minimum of opposition.

Carter does not have a bad track record in doing just that—real disposable income is 9% lower now than at the time of his inauguration in 1977 thanks largely to the cooperation of wage restraint achieved with the trade union bureaucrats. In 1978 Carter gave way to business pressure to cut corporate taxation for the first time in 20 years. He has championed the "de-regulation" (freeing corporations from various federal laws governing health, safety, prices etc) of the oil industry, the Airlines and is currently struggling to deregulate the haulage industry. For his next term Carter is offering \$188 billions in tax cuts for big business investment programmes, cuts in federal expenditure and further relaxation of controls on industry.

His own policies for restoring the flagging fortunes of US capitalism include the "Economic Revitalisation Board" which aims to encourage investment in potentially profitable areas of the economy and an



"office of Productivity" aimed at encouraging class collaborationist participation schemes on the Japanese model. In foreign policy Carter has demonstrated that he is as good a defender of US imperialism as Reagan is. In his new "get tough" stand after Afghanistan Carter made it clear that America had the 'right' to intervene militarily if its interests were threatened and proceeded to set up the 'Rapid Deployment Force' to do just that. He quickly gave the administrations political and financial support to the Turkish generals while US military advisors are actively involved in supporting the bloody regime in Salvador in an attempt to prevent any more Nicaraguas in Latin America. IMF and CIA destabilisation has resulted in the electoral debacle for Manley's mildly pro-Cuban Government in Jamaica.

Despite this, due to the escalating problems of the American economy, the US capitalists appear to prefer Reagan's policies even though they could threaten a confrontation with American workers and the assorted minorities. But even if Reagan wins he will in order to minimise any direct clash be undoubtedly ably assisted by the corrupt and avowedly pro-capitalist trade union leadership—the AFL-CIO bureaucracy. As in all elections since the mid-thirties these bureaucrats threw their weight behind the bourgeois Democratic Party—while their competitors the gangster-ridden Teamsters support Reagan.

These bureaucrats have been able to politically expropriate the American working class and hand it over to the Democrats. By maintaining the dominance of the unions

by white skilled workers, by keeping blacks and Hispanics out of the unions or in a clearly weaker and subordinate position and by fostering the racial and community antagonisms they have kept all these workers' militancy sectioned and unpolitical.

In recent years they have done nothing to defend their members against Carter's policies or the growing tide of racist violence in the States. Terrified of breaking with their bourgeois patrons, they have presided over a dramatic weakening in working class organisation. The American labour movement has paid a harsh price for these Labour Lieutenants of Capital. Organised labour in terms of union membership now represents only 24% of non-agricultural workers. Over the last decade nearly a million jobs have been exported from the North to the Southern states where 'right to work' laws enshrine anti-unionism. In South Carolina, one of 20 states to have such laws, trade union membership is only 8.9% while 'right to work' committees are fighting to extend these to seven other states. The union bureaucrats have repeatedly refused to mount unionisation drives in the South.

FUELLING CHAUVINISM

At the same time the rising tide of chauvinism whipped up over the Iran hostage issue and fuelled by the Reagan's 'Make America Great Again' campaign has led to a dramatic revival of the Klu Klux Klan and other openly racist groupings. While leading Klan figures can endorse Reagan's platform because 'it could have been written by a Klansman', the congressional Democratic nominee in Southern California is a leading Klansman! The growing racist violence against black workers is backed up by the police and courts. In Greensboro a premeditated Klan attack on a black demonstration left five dead. With all the evidence pointing to police collusion in the attack, the state has gone on to charge six demonstrators with 'rioting'! It was this state racism which finally led to the black explosion in Miami in May 1980. Following the acquittal by an all white jury of 4 policemen charged with beating to death a black businessman.

Whichever candidate wins these elections rising unemployment, inflation and attacks on welfare will increase, with the burden falling disproportionately on the blacks and other minority groups. Police repression and their racist auxiliaries like the Klan will play an increasingly important role in attempting to head off an explosion of these workers.

With these prospects ahead of them and with only Carter and Reagan as realistic candidates it is little wonder that so few American workers bother to vote at all. In 1976 only 54% of eligible voters actually voted and many bourgeois commentators are predicting a turnout of less than 50% this time. The American working class has no interest in voting for either of these parties of the bourgeoisie, but only in sweeping away the decaying bourgeois system itself.

(In a future article Workers Power will deal with positions of the various left parties and groups and with the Labour Party question in the United States)

DAVE JENKINS

In March 1921 Harry McShane led his first demonstration, "...a couple of thousand turned up and they were really wild and angry men. Some of them were carrying hand grenades they had brought back from the front - I also knew that some even carried guns on demonstrations. They were a very militant, threatening crowd." They had good reason to be. They were among the 1½ million unemployed in that month. In percentage terms that meant about 12% of those covered by unemployment insurance.

The following month an event took place that was of great significance for the unemployed, the founding of the National Unemployed Workers' Movement (NUWM). Although he himself was not directly involved in its inception, Harry McShane's life ran parallel with that of Wal Hannington, the founder of the NUWM. Both had, by that time, dedicated themselves to Communism and the fight for the rights of the unemployed. Now, sixty years on, with two million on the dole, that fight has to be taken up again.

At the end of the First World War, those who had survived the carnage were confronted with a crisis-racked world. Hundreds of thousands of the recently demobbed and those from the armaments industry who were no longer needed, found that the "land fit for heroes" that they had been promised was, in reality, a land of no work and little or no maintenance.

The revolution in Russia, the five years of upheaval in Germany and the militancy of the masses in France and Britain had sent shivers down the spines of the European bourgeoisie. They knew that their very survival depended on smashing down working class resistance to their attempts to impose wage cuts and permanent mass unemployment.

The Twenties and Thirties were years of continuous struggle. True, there were periods of downturn, between 1920-24 and again 1926-28 for example, but they did not contradict the general trend of revolutionary crises and social upheavals that characterised the two decades. The 1926 General Strike was a high point in the British class struggle, but its aftermath was not all gloom and retreat. By 1929, sections of workers, the Durham miners, for example, were again locked in bitter strikes against the employers. While 1926 was a serious defeat, it did not extinguish the fighting spirit of the working class by any means. The events in France and Spain in the Thirties, the mass strikes and civil war, found a less noisy but not insignificant echo in the struggles of the unemployed in Britain.

The courage and determination of the NUWM was an example to the employed and unemployed alike. It constantly fought against attempts to divide the working class and against the treachery of the leaders of the working class. In 1931 Ramsey MacDonald led a defection to the Tories which led to the formation of the National Government. In the same period the policy of the TUC leaders was 'Mondism' which aimed at the integration of the unions into the State, thus crippling them as fighting organs of the class.

Against this the NUWM took to the streets, mobilised thousands, fought with the police and helped to smash the Mosleyite Fascists.



1921 UNEMPLOYED

We can learn from such struggles by re-examining the programme, strategy and tactics that Hannington, McShane and others developed in their struggles, learn from their experience, their triumphs and failures and see how revolutionaries can apply these lessons today.

In 1920, thousands of militants previously active in the rank and file movements of, for example, the Clyde Workers' committee and the National Shop Stewards and Workers' Committee movement, found themselves victimised and among the unemployed.

The first organisational form the unemployed had adopted in the post war period was that of the local Ex-Servicemen's Association. These bodies were primarily concerned with wandering the streets begging for charity. It was not uncommon to see rival demonstrations actually competing for the pennies of the rich in Oxford Street. The likes of Wal Hannington soon put a stop to that. He and others had gone through a communist training in the rank and file movements and they began the struggle to transform these local organisations into a fighting national organisation.

In October 1920, the London District Council (LDC) of the unemployed was formed, helped by a particularly vicious attack by the police on a demonstration in support of a deputation of London mayors, led by George Lansbury. They were demanding an interview with Lloyd George over unemployment. As

Various contingents of hunger marchers set off.



Hannington puts it, "The Whitehall baton charge .. had the effect of sharply awakening masses of the unemployed to a clearer understanding of their class position and making them realise that they would receive no redress for their plight as unemployed by quietly looking to a capitalist government for sympathy."

A delegate conference was held and within a few weeks the LDC was meeting twice weekly with representatives from thirty one London boroughs. By February of 1921 the LDC had decided to press for a national organisation, bringing together all the local groups throughout the country which had been formed in the struggles against the Boards of Guardians, in order to co-ordinate and lead these struggles.

The basis of the NUWM was laid down at the first national conference which met on 15th April, 1921. Fifteen months later there were 300 local committees with a combined membership of 100,000, linked up by the NUWM and its fortnightly newspaper 'Out of Work'. As a result a permanent, well organised mass unemployed movement was established, with enrolled members and accountable leaders.



1929

In the following years the NUWM developed and refined its tactics considerably. The main plank of its platform was to be the slogan, "Work or Full Maintenance at Trade Union Rates of Wages".

Later, at the second national conference, the full programme was agreed upon as :-

- i) Work or Full Pay
- ii) Abolition of Task Work
- iii) Relief for Unemployment to be Charged to the National Exchequer, administered by the Trade Unions
- iv) Abolition of Overtime.

These points were supplemented by additional demands such as, "No distraint for rent and rates on the goods of an unemployed person" - important demands in the context of the eviction struggles.

However, key elements of a full action programme for the unemployed were missing. The call for work sharing was posed, later, (in the "Unemployed Workers' Charter") as a cut in hours to be determined by "the requirements of the industry". This formulation lets the employers off the hook. A clearer basis to fight on would have been to call for workers' control of the sharing out of work. Similar criticisms have to be made on the absence of the slogan, "trade union control of hiring, firing and productivity".

However, as well as the one penny weekly subscription, NUWM members did have to swear an oath, "to never cease from active strife against this system until this system is abolished". The many thousands mobilised on this basis showed the real revolutionary potential that the struggles against unemployment had.

In fighting for its programme, the NUWM carried out three basic types of activity on a local and national scale. It organised the unemployed locally to fight for their rights and entitlements - the fight to actually get benefit or against eviction. McShane was involved in a number of these, his own included, "We lived on toast, my wife said her stomach was all scratched from toast with nothing on it. There were many others in just the same situation. I had always said that the unemployed should feed their families and not pay the rent, and that is what I finally did."

Then there were the raids and occupations - both for meeting places and as a means of putting pressure on the local authorities. One such occupation, if it can be called that, was of Wandsworth workhouse.

Under the 1834 Poor Law, still in operation, the Boards of Guardians were obliged to give either outdoor relief or accommodation and work. Barbarous as this 'workhouse' system was, the NUWM worked out a way to exploit its provisions to the full. One day 700 people turned up to the Wandsworth workhouse and demanded accommodation until the local Board of Guardians granted outdoor relief. On the second night, a massive demonstration expressed its solidarity. Despite a large police presence, "from the hall of the workhouse speeches were delivered to the demonstrators

"WE WILL NOT STARVE IN SILENCE"



Montage, bottom centre: Police break up a hunger march.

DAVE GARROCH looks at the review of two books about the (Pluto Press) and Wal Hannington (Wishart)

outside. Then, to the amazement and jubilation of the demonstrators, about 9 o'clock just as it was getting dusk, we saw the red flag run up on a flagmast over the workhouse."

The factory raid was also an important aspect of local NUWM work. From the very beginning, the unemployed saw the need for the employed to come to their aid, just as they were pledged to "assist in every possible way workers who may come out on strike or who are locked out." Thus, raids would usually be carried out on a factory where systematic overtime was being worked or where wages were being paid below union rates. At a given signal, a disciplined squad of unemployed workers would rush the gates, guard the exits and phones, until the police came, and a speech would be made explaining the need to ban overtime, to fight for the going rate and on the need for the employed and the unemployed to unite. Major successes were achieved with these tactics in stopping regular overtime and getting workers taken on. However, the demands and tactics were never developed further towards actually agitating for workers' control of the hours.

In 1922 the NUWM was in the vanguard of the struggle against the national lock out of the engineers. Scab factories were raided and pickets were reinforced. The unemployed and locked out engineers demonstrated together for the right to "outdoor relief" for the engineers - a magnificent example of the solidarity and class spirit of the unemployed.

However, perhaps the best remembered activities of the NUWM locally as well as nationally were the hunger marches and demonstrations. Hannington explains their elementary purpose as the refusal to starve in silence. They certainly broke the wall of silence behind which the bosses' press tried to imprison the unemployed.

The first hunger marchers set off from Glasgow in October 1922. After trying the total news blackout, the press lost its nerve and

began to shake with indignation as they neared London. Supposedly led by criminals bearing arms, and replete with Bolshevik gold, these 2,000 men were said to be plotting murder and mayhem on their arrival. In fact their declared aim was to present their demands for work to the Prime Minister, Bonar Law, and to face with the Prime Minister, Bonar Law, a hardy insurrectionary act. Nor was the decision to attempt to deliver a petition to George V. Buckingham Palace and Number Ten were barred to them - by thousands of police - but 70,000 people demonstrated against them when they arrived in London. They received a tremendous reception en route, of course, from the authorities but from the working class districts through which they passed. As far as the authorities were concerned it is difficult to decide who gave whom the harder time of it. One of the aims of the marches was always to force the local guard to provide food and accommodation. Local relief offices and other municipal buildings were therefore, often the target for the marches.

A feature of the marches that impressed everyone was their discipline. "The discipline of the march was self-discipline, imposed by men themselves, in everybody's interests," McShane puts it. Despite the long and arduous miles in the terrible weather, they took good care to preserve it. The value of such discipline was illustrated in Glasgow. On September 1931, an unemployment march was savagely attacked by the police. The next day a 50,000 strong protest demonstration was staged. At that time it was protected by a disciplined corps of 500 unemployed workers, armed with sticks - the police kept their distance this time, such workers' defence corps did not become a general feature in other cities as unemployed often paid the price for this serious injuries at the hands of the police.



1932

Enormous demonstrations were staged in support of the hunger marches when they arrived at their destinations and often they turned into savage battles when the police attacked. The early Thirties saw many street fights between unemployed workers and a brutally repressive state. In Birkenhead, the railings were ripped up by workers as they defended themselves against unprovoked police attacks. A few nights later the police took revenge throughout the working class districts dragging men, women and children from t





Below, centre foreground: Wal Hannington. Below, left corner: Fights against the Means Test.



March.

Employed struggles between the Wars in a
— Harry McShane's "No Mean Fighter"
Unemployed Struggles" (Lawrence and

beds and beating them mercilessly. A report from a Mrs. Davin to the International Labour Defence inquiry revealed the extent of police violence, "My husband got out of bed without waiting to put his trousers on and unlocked the door. As he did so, 12 police rushed into the room, knocking him to the floor, his poor head being split open, kicking him as he lay ... I tried to prevent them hitting my husband. They then commenced to baton me all over the arms and body. As they hit me and my Jim, the children and I were screaming and the police shouted 'Shut up, you parish-fed bastards.'"

The workers in Belfast faced even more savagery. There, the police force was heavily armed and barricades were thrown up when the police opened fire. Several workers were killed and Protestant workers, who believed that the Six Counties was 'their' state found out to whom the RUC really belonged.



1933 When such bitter class battles were taking place what, one might ask, were the official representatives of the class doing? Where were the TUC and Labour Party leaders? Then, as now, they were holding conferences.

A delegate conference on unemployment was convened by the TUC and the Labour Party in 1921. Hannington's report of it may sound familiar to today's militants. "Many of the delegates had come prepared to vote for 24 hour strike action to compel the government to face up to the question of unemployment. The platform refused to allow the delegates to discuss anything other than the official resolution which they had put forward. This resolution contained no proposals for action, it simply condemned the failure of the government on unemployment and referred to the five parliamentary by-elections which were in progress, urging that the best way in which the workers could express their opposition to the Lloyd George government on its failure in respect to unemployment was to work for the return of the Labour candidates in these by-elections."

However, in 1922, the TUC General Council decided to organise a national, "day of action". Powerful demonstrations were to be held ... on a Sunday! Hannington, it must be said, fails to point out the function of these "Unemployed Sundays" (another was held in 1924) which, in fact, kept employed workers out of the direct action struggle against unemployment but, at

the same time, allowed the TUC to present itself as, "doing something" on behalf of the jobless.

The TUC consistently refused the NUWM affiliation and equally rejected its call for a, "24 hour general strike against the government in regard to unemployment". In the aftermath of the 1926 General Strike the TUC, in line with its "peace in industry" policy, severed its connections with the NUWM completely and broke up the Joint Advisory Council which had been set up in 1923. From then on the TUC did its best to sabotage and betray the NUWM's work.

The 1927 miners' march was denounced as a "Communist stunt" which did not have the support of the official trade union movement. This signalled, as Hannington points out, "an outburst of violent abuse and excitement from the capitalist press, who called for the government to ban the march and for the police to, 'show no mercy' for the political incendiaries who were organising it against the wishes of the respectable elements of the Labour movement". The police duly obliged by stepping up their campaign of harassment and intimidation.

Walter, later Lord, Citrine went so far as to specifically instruct Trades Councils not to render any assistance to the march.

The marchers set out with a grim determination nonetheless. The first day's march was to end in Newport, "Our reception in Newport surpassed all expectations. Men and women of the Newport labour movement overwhelmed us with their eagerness to serve food and provide every possible comfort. Here was the real heart of the labour movement, beating to greet us! Here were the typical men and women, examples of the great mass of hard-working folk who really constitute the life and vitality of the movement."

This support, that ordinary workers gave unstintingly, contrasts dramatically with the actions of the contemptible Citrine and his cronies. Between 1927 and 1933, the TUC repeatedly tried to set up bureaucratically strait-jacketed unemployed committees which did nothing for the unemployed. However, the general secretaries were unable to organise in a sphere that was "non-negotiable" with the bosses. This ensured that even these feeble



efforts came to nought. For his services as a saboteur of the struggle against unemployment, Citrine, the TUC leader, was made a Knight Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire. As the Daily Telegraph noted at the time, this was a, "generous admission that those also serve who oppose the government of the day." The bosses have always been glad of the service of men like Citrine whose opposition to them is a gentlemanly bluff — but whose opposition to workers defending themselves is real indeed.

The betrayals of the reformist leadership reached their culmination, however, with the Labour government which came to power in 1929. It was this Labour government which refused to abolish task work, which refused to cancel the relief debts of the boards of guardians and which presided over a vast increase in the ranks of the unemployed. These measures were justified then, as now, as "economies" that were necessary to save the pound etc.



1934 The 1930 hunger march was the first to include a detachment of women marchers. Ironically the first woman Minister of Labour, Margaret Bondfield, was personally responsible for the unceremonious ejection of a deputation of the marchers from the Ministry of Labour. She had a long history as an enemy of the unemployed. A signatory to the Blanesburgh Report (1927) which had proposed a severe cut in benefits that the Tories had not dared to carry through, she and her ministerial colleagues succeeded where Baldwin and Co. had failed. They did this via the Anomalies Act and the introduction of the infamous Means Test, which deprived the unemployed of £30 million in benefits.

It was an attempt to carry through a further cut that finally split the Cabinet and made even the TUC jib and led to MacDonald's defection (with Margaret Bondfield!) and the creation of a National Government. At the same time, Citrine blocked a delegation of unemployed Welsh miners from addressing the TUC at Bristol. When they were baton-charged outside the Congress by the police, Citrine attacked the marchers and praised the police.

As the dole queues grew, so did the determination of the TUC and Labour leaders to defuse the extensive wave of militancy and to preserve the capitalist system that guaranteed them their privileges.

The legendary 'Jarrow Crusade' was, in fact, a clear example of how the reformists neutered the struggles of the unemployed. It is no accident that this march is the one that is kept alive by the reformists' and the bosses' propaganda, as the symbol of the Thirties. It was one of the smallest marches ever to go to London from the unemployment blackspots. It was organised by the Jarrow Labour MP, Ellen Wilkinson who ensured from the outset that it would be a law-abiding, passive, pleading demonstration. It was a far cry from the NUWM marches of the Twenties and early Thirties which set out fully aware that the only official reception they would get was from police truncheons. The non-political nature of the Jarrow march was guaranteed by a grotesque form of class collaboration. Two agents were appointed to arrange the eating and sleeping arrangements — one from the Labour Party and the other from the Tories!

On the other hand, as a result of Special Branch intervention, a CP member was expelled from the march. Fears were expressed that the NUWM might take advantage of the crusade but Wilkinson reassured the authorities by refusing to have anything to do with an NUWM march from the North-East taking place at the same time. The Home Office rewarded this respect for the rule of law by organising a tea for the Jarrow marchers in the House of Commons as a "good way of encouraging and placating them." (From the Special Branch report on the Jarrow March, 1936)

The Jarrow March, despite the undoubted sincerity of the marchers and many who supported them, was a typical example of the TUC and Labour Party attitude to the unemployed. It was class collaborationist to the core and reduced the unemployed to pitiful objects of charity. Its aim was to provide these leaders with cover for their own inaction.

The mid and late Thirties saw a change in the CP's and NUWM's attitude to the reformist leaders. Between 1929 and 1933, the CP's politics were dominated by the notorious "Third Period" line dictated by the Communist International. Stalin's famous dictum that Social Democracy and Fascism were "twins" meant, in Britain, calling the Labour Party "Social

Fascist", striving to create revolutionary unions and abjuring the united front tactic. McShane and Hannington, in practice, ignored the worst lunacies of this line which would have spelt doom for the NUWM. The CP leaders were unable to call them to account because the NUWM and the militant battles it fought were the only mass actions that the CP was involved in.

The CP's change of line in 1934/5 to the Communist International's 'Peoples' Front' tactic (which called for class collaborationist fronts between communists, ILPers, Labour Party members, Liberals and even 'progressive' Tories) blunted the cutting edge of the NUWM. Gone was the merciless exposure of the TUC and Labour Party leaders.

By 1936, the CP's criticisms had become so mild that Clement Attlee was quite prepared to share the platform at a London rally welcoming the march of that year. A contemporary police report remarked, "speeches were moderate in tone and the communist speakers avoided provocation or extremist remarks".

Indeed, such an approach undercut the very existence of an independent, rank and file based unemployed organisation. The 1936 march was the last major unemployed demonstration of the 1930's.

Wal Hannington's and Harry McShane's books vividly evoke the atmosphere of the class struggle in the Twenties and Thirties, the poverty and degradation that capitalist crises visit upon the unemployed and their families. They also show the militancy and courage, the pride and dignity that sprang from resistance and organisation. On that basis alone they are worth reading. But there are also lessons to be learnt, and problems to be addressed. One problem with which the NUWM had to grapple, and which is still with us today, is how to unite the unemployed and the employed. The NUWM, correctly, never ignored the official movement, despite its sorry record. They continued to demand that the TUC do what it claimed to do — serve the interests of the working class.

The NUWM consistently fought for the right of the unemployed to take their place inside the official labour movement, in Trades Councils, and at the TUC itself. It fought for the unionisation of the unemployed and against the betrayals of Citrine and Co., who were eager to forget the plight of their ex-members.



1935 The life blood of the NUWM was its local organisations, born out of the struggle against Boards of Guardians. They provided the solid foundation for the hunger march mobilisations, the organised resistance to police brutality in Birkenhead, Belfast, Glasgow and elsewhere. They ensured that the unemployed were mobilised against capitalism — and not against their employed fellow workers.

Such local committees need to be established today. They need to be built in every town to organise the unemployed, especially the youth, on a permanent basis, bringing them into militant action against the bosses. Such local roots will provide the best basis for national initiatives marches etc.

A national organisation of the unemployed must be built around a clear programme, clear political answers to the crisis that the unemployed and the employed face together. For they do face it together, and if unity is not welded in action the working class faces serious dangers. There is no doubt that deep frustration and growing despair could develop within the ever-increasing army of the unemployed, particularly so in regard to the youth. If that frustration and despair, that anger, is not directed against its class enemy, there is a real prospect of it turning in upon itself in the cancerous form of fascism. Not only the fascists could benefit from a leaderless army of the unemployed. The spectre of a chronically weakened Trade Union movement lies before us in the shape of a divided and demoralised working class lacking the strength to even defend, let alone improve, wages, conditions and social services.

Such a prospect need never become a reality provided, at every level of the labour movement, in every town, every plant, every Trades Council the question of the fight against unemployment is taken up. A mass national unemployed movement, based on uncompromising hostility to the capitalist system and linked to the employed workers, the trade unions can, and must, build in the months ahead.

Each symbol represents 200 000 unemployed.



Generalised Defeatism-not

the Marxist method

THE IRAN-IRAQ WAR

"We Marxists differ from both pacifists and anarchists in that we deem it necessary to study each war historically (from the standpoint of Marx's dialectical materialism) and separately." (Lenin—Socialism and War). The war between Iran and Iraq, a war between two non-imperialist but capitalist states, has thrown Lenin's injunction to study particular wars and their historical implications, into sharp relief.

Marxists have always understood that, despite their brutal nature, wars can play historically progressive roles. Marxists have never been against war 'in general'. Wars of national liberation against imperialism for example, are wars that we would regard as just and progressive. It was an understanding of this aspect of war that led Marx and Engels, during the nineteenth century, to take sides in various wars between capitalist states. They recognised that, in the era of the development of nation states in Europe, it was possible for capitalist states to play a progressive role by destroying remnants of feudalism and establishing integrated national states and economies. This facilitated the development of a unified proletariat. Class struggle against the bourgeoisie could take place free from the need to struggle for national unity and independence alongside the bourgeoisie. It was legitimate for marxists to support certain wars of national defence. Marx and Engels recognised the first phase of the Franco-Prussian war in 1870 as a justified war of defence on Germany's part. They saw the war as a potential vehicle for the defeat of Bonapartism in France and for the national unification of Germany. They argued this in spite of the fact that Prussia was governed by the reactionary Junker Bismarck. The nature of the regime did not determine their attitude to the war, whilst that war was a purely defensive one:

"That Lehmann (a nicknames for William I of Prussia - WP) Bismarck and Co., are in command and that it must minister to their temporary glorification if they conduct it successfully, we have to thank the miserable state of the German bourgeoisie. It is certainly very unpleasant, but it cannot be altered...In the first place, Bismarck, as in 1866 (the Austro-Prussian War -WP) so at present is doing a bit of our own work in his own way, and without meaning to, but all the same he is doing it." (Engels to Marx, August 15th, 1870)

THE SOCIAL CHAUVINISTS

Marx and Engels support for Germany did not mean cessation of the class struggle. They opposed German chauvinism, and the annexations Bismarck planned. They argued against a war on the French people and they supported Bebel and Liebknecht who abstained on the vote for war credits in the German Reichstag. However, viewed from a historical standpoint, despite Bismarck, a successful defence of Germany was the most progressive outcome.

The social chauvinists of the Second International, Kautsky, Plekhanov, Hyndman and Co sought to use Marx and Engels position on the Franco-Prussian war to justify their position of 'defence of the fatherland' in the imperialist war of 1914-18. This treachery was justified by a generalisation of Marx and Engels position on a specific 'national' war, to war 'in general'. Lenin attacked the social chauvinists, who took no heed of the fact that since the 1890s capitalism had entered into the imperialist epoch—an epoch of decline, with capitalism having outlived its progressive role. It was left to Lenin to designate the precise nature of the war and develop the only consistently revolutionary slogan with regard to it—'turn the imperialist war into a civil war'. For Lenin, in this war the 'continuation of politics' was the continuation of imperialist predatory politics. It was a war for the redivision of colonial slaves not a 'national' war of defence by either side. To side as the social chauvinists were doing with their own imperialist bourgeoisies, meant suspending the class struggle, abandoning a revolutionary perspective and sacrificing the interests and lives of the working class to the profit lusts of the monarchs, ministers and magnates of Europe and the USA. The position of revolutionary defeatism, that is arguing that the defeat of one's own army is a lesser evil as compared with its victory as a result of the suspension of class struggle, flowed from Lenin's assessment of the imperialist nature of this specific war.

Lenin's position did not flow from the fact that it was capitalist states who were doing the fighting. He argued that in general the age of justified national wars in advanced Europe was past, as most of these nations were clearly imperialist. However, he was also clear that national wars could still take place and that they would be justified ones

deserving of the support of marxists. This was most likely to be the case in areas such as the Balkans or Ireland, where the national question was unresolved, or in the 'backward' countries of Asia and Africa. Outside of the context of a generalised imperialist conflagration (ie one clearly aimed at the re-division of the world by the imperialists, in their interests and against the oppressed nationalities) a national war was possible even between two advanced capitalist powers:

"In my view, admission of, 'Defence of the Fatherland' in a national war fully answers the requirements of Marxism. In 1891 the German Social Democrats really should have defended their fatherland in a war against Boulanger and Alexander (former French Minister of War and the Russian Tsar - WP). This would have been a peculiar variety of national war." (Letter to Inessa Armand, November 30th, 1916).

Peculiar because it would have pitted Kaiser Wilhelm (William II) against Czarist Russia and republican France. Justifiable because the French and Russian aim was to dismember the recently unified German nation. Lenin emphasised this possibility against those within his own ranks who played into the hands of the social chauvinists by renouncing national wars and 'defence of the fatherland' in general. For Lenin this error revealed a failure to understand that within an epoch there are varied phenomena: "in which in addition to the typical there is *always* something else." (Letter to Zinoviev August 1914).

In the same letter he went on to argue: "And you (Zinoviev -WP) repeat this error, when you write in your remarks, 'small countries cannot in the present epoch defend their fatherland.' Untrue!!...One should say, 'Small countries, too, cannot in imperialist wars, which are most typical of the current imperialist epoch, defend their fatherland.' That is quite different...We are not at all against, 'defence of the fatherland' in general. You will never find that nonsense in a single resolution (or in any of my articles). We are against defence of the fatherland and a defensive position in the imperialist, typical of the imperialist epoch. But, in the imperialist epoch there may be also 'just', 'defensive', revolutionary wars (namely, i) national, ii) civil, iii) socialist wars and suchlike)." (Collected Works Vol. 35 pp228-9, all emphases in original)

A RIDICULOUS DISTORTION

There is no doubt that for Lenin the position of revolutionary defeatism was only automatically the correct position with regard to wars that were definitively imperialist. To apply it to wars in general, even when those wars are conducted by capitalist states, is a ridiculous distortion of the marxist position on war. The crucial thing is always to: "examine the policy pursued prior to the war, the policy that led to and brought about the war." (Lenin—A Caricature of Marxism and Imperialist Economism).

It is with this in mind that we must analyse the war between Iran and Iraq.

The Middle East, of which Iran and Iraq are a part, is an area where the borders have been drawn, not as a result of genuine national development, but according to the dictates of imperialism. The area is a 'balkanised' one. That is, its nationalities have been divided by states created by imperialism. The clearest example of this, although by no means the only one, is the Kurdish nation. The Kurds homeland is divided between 5 states, Turkey, Syria, Iraq, Iran and the USSR. The states that were created out of the breakup of the Ottoman Empire after the First World War, into 'mandates' of French and British imperialist were turned into semi-colonies with puppet rulers when these powers relaxed their direct control, to check the development of any anti-imperialist or socialist sentiments and activities amongst the masses. Thus when the British granted Iraq independence in 1932 they had already installed the Hashemite Emir Feisal I on the throne. Likewise in Iran, the British helped Reza Khan to the peacock throne in 1925. After the second world war, following the consolidation of US imperialist hegemony the CIA toppled the bourgeois nationalist Mossadeq regime in 1953, thereby bringing the last Shah to power. In the various other countries of the oil rich region existing semi-feudal regimes were bolstered (notably in the Arabian peninsula) in order to guarantee that the West's vital interests would be served. The Shah of Iran from 1953 to 1979



acted as faithful gendarme for imperialism, guarding the West's 'jugular vein' as he himself described the Straits of Hormuz.

The unresolved national questions and the maintenance of fiercely conservative regimes dominate the politics of the middle east. In the West the existence of Israel and the denial of Palestinian national rights adds a further dimension to this highly unstable region. Within this area the interests of the various imperialist powers meet and interlock and are confronted with the Soviet Union. The USSR shares borders with Iran and Turkey and has friendship treaties with Syria and Iraq (although as we shall see friendship with the latter is wearing a bit thin). This 'arc of crisis' by its very nature, is riddled with contradictions and will inevitably be dragged into wars and social upheavals. It is the modern equivalent to the Balkans. The imperialists have a direct interest in every move made in the area. It is in this context that the war between Iran and Iraq must be understood.

Iraq, until recently, was regarded as hostile to imperialism. It overthrew its monarchy in 1958 and since 1968 it has been ruled by the Ba'thist Socialist Party. It was friendly to the USSR and was a vocal supporter of the PLO. However, beneath this picture of apparent radicalism, there exists a repressive bonapartism, embodied in Saddam Hussein, jealous of its power, savage to its opponents (the Kurds) and to the Iraqi Communist Party

MILLIONS OF US DOLLARS

Hussein and his Tikrit clique (the place many of them come from) are keen to establish Baghdad as the qala'a—the citadel of the Arab revolution. In practice this means impressing the neighbouring monarchies, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and the others that Iraq can fill the gap left by the departure of the Shah, as the power in the Gulf. To do this, however, Hussein needs to win the support, not only of Khaled and Hussein (of Jordan) but also of US, French and British imperialism. His eagerness to achieve this was demonstrated by his murderous repression of the Iraqi CP, his condemnation of the USSR's invasion of Afghanistan and, most importantly, his escalation of oil production to meet the West's needs, which has made Iraq the second largest exporter in the world. Iraq has tried to become less dependent on Moscow by turning to France, in particular for weapons and technology.

In 1972 Iraq got 95% of its weaponry from the USSR and nearly all of its non-military imports. Now only 70% of its arms are from Moscow and the Soviet Union ranks fourteenth in the list of Iraq's trading partners, behind Japan, West Germany, France, Italy and Britain. France has financed the building of nuclear reactors in Iraq. The USA, which had until recently extremely cool relations with Baghdad, has been making extensive diplomatic and commercial overtures. Millions of US dollars are being pumped into a number of computer projects while Carter's National Security Adviser Brzezinski declared on television that: "We see no fundamental incompatibility of interests between the United States and Iraq. We do not feel that American/Iraqi relations need to be frozen in antagonism." (Newsweek 6/10/80).

These sentiments were also expressed by the American bosses 'Wall Street Journal':

"With revolutionary Iran creating so much tension in the Middle East Washington would clearly welcome any role that the Iraqis might play in stabilising the Persian Gulf." (4/6/80).

Hussein has not been slow to respond to such come-ons from the west: "We do not drink oil we sell it, and we know that our major markets are in the West and in Japan," he declared. (Time Magazine 6/10/80). His bid to gain the favour of the West, prove himself to be a force to be reckoned with and fill the power vacuum left by the Shah, could well be clinched if he were to strike a death blow to Iran, whose revolutionary turmoil has been a source of instability to imperialism's clients in the Gulf region since February 1979.

In looking at the politics being continued on Iraq's part it is clear that it is an objectively pro-imperialist course that is being followed—one designed to allow imperialism to re-establish its control in a crucial region.

The mass movement that overthrew the Shah was objectively anti-imperialist i.e. it brought down the CIA's chosen client who ran Iran as a semi-colony for US capital for a quarter of a century. Subjectively i.e. in terms of the consciousness of the masses, it was profoundly contradictory. The masses of the urban poor, the intellectuals and the working class were consciously anti-imperialist, i.e. they saw that no improvement in their lives was possible without the destruction of the economic and military stranglehold of the United States. Furthermore differing sections participated in the revolution to achieve their own social and political goals—the workers to win freedom of organisation, to throw off the Savak guards and informers, the despotic managers and their American overseers. The nationalities fought to win their autonomy within a more democratic Iran. The peasants fought to get their land back from the Pahlavi court clique, the agribusinesses etc.

AN ISLAMIC 'SAFEGUARD'

But they fought with profound religious prejudices. Khomeini's intransigence and the bazaari-mullah organisation demagogically convinced them that an Islamic Republic would safeguard all their interests. In fact Bazargan, Bani Sadr, Khomeini and the Islamic Republican party have been able to use these prejudices to confuse and obscure the proletariat's class consciousness and limit their shoras to the most elementary stage of workers control—a veto over local management and central government directives. The regime has been able to partially negate democratic rights—of speech, assembly, right to self-determination etc. It has inflicted 'Islamic dress' on women and Islamic law on the populace in general. It has launched vicious full-scale war on the Kurds and a dictatorial police regime in Khuzistan. Yet this repression is, we repeat, partial. Why? Because large sections of the population are armed and have resisted and even rolled back Khomeini's attacks. The Kurds, the Left, the working class defend their gains against Khomeini. The question is, is the present war predominantly a continuation of the Khomeini regi-



above, and left, Hussain makes up to the monarchs

imes brutal attacks on these gains or is it a continuation (by other means) of the masses struggle against Imperialist-Pahlavi oppression? Are the masses via their Islamic false consciousness being mobilised against Iraq to further crush democratic rights or smash the working class, or are the masses in spite of Islamic consciousness defending an invasion whose success would directly serve the interests of imperialism? We would argue that it is the latter that is dominant. The Khuzestani Arabs are fighting the Iraqis in Abadan and Khorramshahr not in the name of Persian chauvinism, but because they know that behind the Iraqi lines are the pro-Shah emigres like Bakhtiar and General Oveissi, the notorious architect of the Black Friday massacre in Teheran. They know that the 5000 strong force of pro-Shah shock troops have been welded together, under the protection and encouragement of Hussein, the 'butcher of Baghdad'. To deny the progressive aspect of the masses struggle against such elements in this war, and to see only that they are defending Khomeini and his counter-revolutionary aims, must logically lead to denying that the Iranian revolution had any progressive content.

SECTARIAN ABSTRACTION

Every revolution against Imperialism, to the extent that bourgeois forces participate in it and lead it, has forces of counter-revolution within it. Bourgeois (and pre-bourgeois) forces can only be episodically, tactically, in conflict with Imperialism. They can and will turn with bloody repression on the workers and peasants as did Chang Kai Shek in China, as did Nasser in Egypt, Kassem in Iraq etc etc. But to draw from this the conclusion that 'at night all cats are black' is merely to testify that one has the bandage of sectarian-abstraction bound tight about your eyes. To see no difference between Restoration in arms against the gains of a revolution and that revolutions internal foes, temporarily forced to defend it to save their own skins, is a frank confession of political bankruptcy. For those like the International Spartacist Tendency who never saw anything progressive in the overthrow of the Shah it is at least consistent. For those like Workers Action/Socialist Organiser and the Workers Socialist League it is a signal that they have given up on the Iranian Revolution—besmirched and disfigured as it now is by clerical reaction. Trotsky however did not assess revolutions on the basis of how pleasant or unpleasant it was to be associated with them:

"A revolutionary cannot recognise the revolution as finished until objective indications leave no room for doubt." (The Spanish Kornilovs and the Spanish Stalinists).

We argue that Iraq's invasion is an attempt, from the outside, to finish off decisively the Iranian revolution, on behalf of Imperialism, the reactionary feudal states of the Gulf, and counter-revolution inside Iran. The fact that there are counter-revolutionary elements within Iran (Khomeini and Bani Sadr) who in the present situation pursuing an objectively progressive goal (the successful defence of Iran) is no mystery to those who have learnt anything from Marx and Engels assessment of Bismarck's role in the Franco-Prussian war.

But the United States and all the other Imperialist powers are neutral in the present conflict. We know this because every bourgeois diplomat, and their camp followers in the press, repeatedly tell us that this is the case. This in itself is an immediate cause for Marxists to look beyond United Nations

Correction

In the last issue of Workers' Power the article, 'Slump and Stagnation' contained a typographical error in the second column. Where the article reads, "...because the worker is paid less than the value of his labour power..." it should, of course, read, "...because the worker is paid less than the value of the product of his labour power..."

speeches. In an area so central for the imperialists to think that they are not implicated in the events now taking place is ludicrous. As Lenin pointed out when the imperialists were busy pretending neutrality in the squabbles in the Balkans and Ottoman empire:

"Indeed it would be childish to believe the words of the diplomats and disregard their deeds, the collective action of the power against revolutionary Turkey (NB the revolution in Turkey at that time was a bourgeois nationalist one being led by the Young Turk movement—WP). The very fact that the present developments were preceded by meetings and conversations of the Foreign Ministers and Heads of State of several countries, is enough to dispel this naive faith in diplomatic statements." (Events in the Balkans and in Persia October 16th 1908).

Like Lenin we prefer to look at the deeds that imperialism is performing in the Gulf. There can be no doubt that, via the channels of secret diplomacy and their satellite surveillance systems, that the USA knew that the Iraqi invasion was in preparation. Indeed the US State Department admitted as much when it commented that Washington was "neither forewarned nor surprised by the fighting." (8 Days October 4th 1980) The imperialists have acted, not to check the attack or discourage Iraq, but to prevent the war from spreading and further disrupting oil supplies. They are not bothered that Iran was attacked but merely that Iraq has not been able to finish the job off quickly enough. The Economist lucidly explained: "If Iran had cracked at the first tap of Iraq's hammer, Mr Saddam Hussein, without much cost would have demonstrated his muscle, short circuited the spread of Shia fundamentalism and, maybe, basked in the thanks of a grateful world." (October 11th 1980).

REINFORCING ITS FLEET

The US has supplied Saudi Arabia, whose King telephoned Baghdad at the start of the war to wish Hussein good luck in his adventure, and whose airfields have been used by Iraqi planes, with four AWACs. The US only has 19 of these specialised reconnaissance planes in its entire armoury. It has also reinforced its fleet in the Gulf with the guided missile destroyer the 'Leahy'. The other imperialist powers have joined in, publicly renouncing the idea of a naval task force, but in practice creating one. There are now 58 warships in the region—British, French, Australian and American. Since it is hardly likely that Iran is about to invade other Gulf states these gunboats have one express purpose—to intimidate Iran and prevent it from taking any action against Saudi or Oman should they enter the war. The US pretext was a supposed Iranian threat to the Straits of Hormuz, through which the oil tankers bound for the west, pass. As the American magazine Newsweek put it:

"These actions were designed, in part to reassure the Saudis and other Gulf states of US protection. But their primary goal was to counter any Iranian threat to the Persian Gulf oil supplies". (October 13th 1980—our emphasis). Yet the recovery of the Tumb islands in the Straits was an Iraqi war aim and the only troops reported moving there were Iraqi ones. Success for Iraq would benefit the imperialists by putting an end to the destabilising effects that the Iranian revolution has been having. It would also pave the way for a new power bloc of Iraq/Saudi Arabia/Jordan (two of whom are already armed by the US, the other increasingly so by France) which could replace the deposed Shah as gendarme, Hussein's failure to win a swift and decisive victory, due mainly to the dogged resistance of the local population and the Islamic and left militias, is already losing him friends. Sadat—the US's staunch ally has done an about face and condemned Iraq. Hussein will discover that there is no honour amongst thieves. Faced with his failure the US may well move to apply pressure to terminate the war.

The reason cited for adopting a defeatist position by both the Socialist Organiser and the Socialist Press (paper of the Workers Socialist League), is that both regimes are capitalist and nasty. Socialist Press has perceptively noted that:

"Though neither is a direct client state of imperialism, their anti-imperialist rhetoric cannot hide the fact that both are reactionary governments administered by petty bourgeois demagogues within the framework of domestic and world capitalism." (Socialist Press October 1980).

Socialist Organiser don't go any further: "The war between Iran and Iraq is a war between two reactionary regimes. The outcome can only be further misery for the masses and the national minorities in both countries." (27th September 1980).

Both of these tendencies are guilty of seeing the Iranian revolution as over. They have both seemingly forgotten that the Iranian revolution did not topple capitalism, but was a revolution nevertheless which revolutionaries would have defended against Iraq if it had invaded in March, April, May 1979 despite the then reactionary capitalist nature of the regime. It is not the nature of the

FRANCE: FASCIST ATTACKS

By G.Doy and J.Daniels

FOLLOWING the bomb attack on a Paris Synagogue on October 3rd and the bombings in Bologna and Munich, the media have paid considerable attention to fascist and racist activities in Western Europe.

In France, the bombing in the Rue Copernic was only one of an increasingly violent spate of anti-Jewish attacks. Although in recent months this activity has increased, it is not something new. From June 1977 to September 1980, 159 fascist attacks took place in France without any real outcry. Similarly, the fact that between 1971 and 1977, 70 Algerian workers were murdered by fascists has occasioned little comment. No one has been arrested for these acts, which is little wonder given that the French police, like all others, is itself riddled with racism and numbers actual fascists in its ranks. The background to these attacks lies in the, "respectable" official racism of a ruling class trying to solve its economic problems.

With unemployment at 1.4 million (6.8% of the workforce), inflation running at 10% and predictions for economic growth gloomy, the French ruling class sees the expulsion of France's 400,000 immigrants as one way to alleviate some of the social unrest caused by unemployment. Measures designed to do this have encouraged racist and fascist organisations to launch anti-immigrant and anti-Jewish violence. Speaking only a few days after the bombing, on October 14th, the Secretary of State for Immigration, Stoleru said, "There's no question of accepting any more foreigners in France. When we have 1.4 million unemployed in our nation, we must stand firm on this."

Whilst in other imperialist countries fascism has been directed mainly at immigrant workers, in France the presence of 700,000 Jews, many of them Sephardic Jews who have come from North Africa over the last twenty years, has led to them being targeted by the racists. The police are openly sympathetic to racism, the FANE (a major fascist group) are alleged to have 30 members in the police force, some at high levels. Even sections of the government have clear links with the fascists. Several MP's in Giscard's party, e.g. Alain Medelin, Gerard Longuet and Hubert Bassot, are known to have such links. The present French government has collaborated with extreme right parties in the past, and in the 1974 presidential campaign, several of Giscard's bodyguards were members of fascist groups.

The Jewish community itself has been divided in its response to the recent attacks. The bourgeois leaders, such as the banker Rothschild and J.P.Bloch, have been eager to pass on from attacking fascism to attacking communists and the left, equating anti-zionism with anti-semitism while participating in a popular frontist anti-fascist alliance which they hope will pressurise the state to take

regime that determines our attitude precisely because it is not the regime that we are defending—it is specified gains of the revolution that the masses have won for themselves that we defend. We know the regime of Khomeini is 'reactionary', that it attacks the Kurds, women the left. We know that even during the war the regime has slaughtered 80 Kurds and that Khomeiniite guards ordered the Fedayeen fighters to remove their red arm bands. Do we support or defend this? Of course not! We stand with the Kurds against Khomeini. We stand for total and an uninterrupted political opposition to Khomeini. We favour his overthrow and the replacement of his Islamic Republic by a workers State. We take every opportunity to denounce him and Bani Sadr, who is busily rebuilding the regular Iranian army for reactionary purposes. We would fight to build independent workers organisations—shoras and workers militia. But if revolutionary politics consisted merely in the repetition of such truths then life would be simple indeed—and it is the simple life that Socialist Organiser and Socialist Press, with their blissful disregard of the concrete circumstances obviously long for.

CHILDISH IN THE EXTREME

Is the Iranian revolution over? We would argue that the fact that Khomeini has not been able to consolidate a reactionary regime and has had to rely on the mobilised strength of the armed masses to defend Iran is precisely the difference, not between Khomeini and Hussein's intentions, but between the countries they rule over. Like Chian Kai Shek, who the left opposition and Fourth International tirelessly opposed, the Iranian regime can be forced, because it was installed by an anti imperialist revolution in which the masses played an overwhelming part, into a role they abhor. We do not support them in any way, but while we cannot take the power ourselves, we will fight alongside them, independently and under our own slogans. We would not, if we had revolutionary deputies in the Majlis, give any vote of confidence to the Islamic government—we would not vote them war credits, or any other aid for their war effort. But, at the front, recognising the war as not simply one of capitalism versus capitalism, which is childish in the extreme, we would engage in a military united front against a common enemy, whilst in no way supporting the people that history has chosen, unfortunately, to put alongside us. As Trotsky explained with

legal action to contain fascism. They call for the resignation of the Minister of the Interior and for the 'purging' of fascists from the police.

The Jewish petty-bourgeoisie on the other hand have been swift to take direct action and, through the Jewish Defence Organisation (JDO) to build defence squads to hunt down fascists. Others looked to increased propaganda for emigration to Israel as a solution to fascism. Zionist leaders in France, eager to prevent Jews uniting with the Left and with immigrant workers, were quick to cast suspicion for the synagogue bombing onto the PLO. The Zionist organisations did their level best on the massive demonstrations held after the bombings to avoid the possibility of drawing in the masses of Arab and African workers who are themselves the victims of fascist attacks. There were separate demonstrations of Jews on the one hand and trade unionists and the Left on the other, in many provincial towns.

Zionism is a nationalism created in reaction to anti-semitism. It regards all Jews, regardless of class, culture, language, etc., as the scattered elements of a nation. From the beginning its declared aim was to find, "A land without a people for a people without a land." Such a nationalism was, however, bound to develop from a utopia into reaction when put into practice.

Converted into Colonialists

Instead of challenging and fighting the class that provoked anti-semitism, Zionism turned its back on the working class movement in favour of the integration of all Jews into a nation in Palestine. This project, carried through in alliance with British and later, American, imperialism converted the utopian nationalism into a colonialist, pro-imperialist ideology - because Palestine was a land WITH a people. By driving the Arabs from their land, the Jewish refugees from racist oppression became themselves racist oppressors and Zionism, from a utopian evasion of the struggle against fascism, became an oppressive and racist ideology and Israel became a racist, expansionist state.

Israel's interest in equating anti-semitism with anti-zionism is two fold. Firstly, it helps to prevent unity between French Jews and other victims of the fascists. Such a unity would strike a blow at the heart of Zionist politics and stand as an alternative to emigration to Israel for these Jews. Secondly, Israel's very existence depends on the financial and military support of imperialism. In recent years the Israeli government has seen the French bourgeoisie turn increasingly towards the Arab states. By giving support to a popular frontist agitation against anti-semitism and embroiling in this the question of the French government's recognition of the PLO, the Zionists hope to prevent the French government from striking a deal with the more conservative Arab regimes.

The message that the Left must get over is that only working class action against the fascist vermin can stop them from growing as the crises of capitalism get ever deeper. The democratic state cannot be called in to intervene against them. This is not just because its police are more sympathetic to racists and fascists than they ever will be to immigrant workers or Jews but, more fundamentally, because the bourgeoisie needs the fascists in reserve. In periods of heightened class struggle and social crisis these gangs can do what the state forces could not do without breaking their 'democratic' alibi, that is, they can be used to murder militants and bomb union and political headquarters.

What is needed is NOT (as the IMG call for) a French Anti-Nazi League, but a united front to defend workers in struggle, Jews and Arabs against fascist attack and to acquaint the heads of these scum with the cobblestones when they try to march on them. Such a united front must attempt to involve the unions, the CP, the SP, the far Left groups, the organisations of immigrant workers and the Jewish defence groups.

regard to Spain during a war between two capitalist governments (the one he was arguing for a military united front with was at the time killing Trotskyists and left centrists of the POUM):

"We have not the slightest confidence in the capacity of this government to conduct the war and assure victory. We must accuse this government of protecting the rich and starving the poor. This government must be smashed. So long as we are not strong enough to replace it, we are fighting under its command. But on every occasion we express openly our non-confidence in it; it is the only possible way to mobilise the masses politically against this government and to prepare its overthrow. Any other politics would be a betrayal of the revolution." (Trotsky—Answers to Questions on the Spanish situation).

The Socialist Organiser and Socialist Press are defeatists in more than one sense of that word. They are defeatists with regard to the uncompleted Iranian revolution. Its meandering course has led them to give up on developing precise tactics and a definite strategy in circumstances of war and revolution. In the imperialist Britain they will be punished for this only by polemic. In the battle for Abadan—objectively a battle to defend the Iranian revolution—there would be little room for the hollow phrasemongering of the WSL and Socialist Organiser.

By MARK HOSKISSON

workers power



PHOTO: John Sturrock (Report)



It should come as no surprise to any Ford worker that just as their claim for a 'substantial' wage rise (20% being the figure most often talked about) is being lodged, the Ford bosses have begun to squeal about falling profits, only breaking even this year and so on. Paul Rootes for the management, announced to the media that 'profits will be down substantially' this year. His choice of words was no accident given the claim. Intrepid Ron Todd the T&GWU's national negotiator with Fords, has parried this opening shot from the bosses by claiming that Ford can afford it because of past profits.

No doubt Todd, fearful of a repeat of the strike of 1978 which smashed Callaghan's 5% pay limit, is hoping that he and Rootes, Toy and Co can get together. They can then go through the ritual of contradicting each other a few times over the precise size of the 'substantial' loss or profit, and the size of the 'substantial claim', and then

Strike now for full claim!

strike up an 'honourable' agreement. One that will, most likely, fall well below the full claim and below the present inflation rate.

Ford workers must call a halt to this haggling over Fords profit margins by demanding a 20% wage rise now, based on their needs. In addition we would argue for wages to be protected against inflation—for a 1% rise for every 1% rise in a cost of living index calculated by Ford workers and their families. Total opposition to all lay offs and redundancies planned in Fords, combined with strike action NOW throughout the company, can force the bosses to meet the claim in full. If Ron Todd is not prepared to lead such a fight then he must make room for those who will!

GARDNERS OCCUPATION: The way to defend jobs

BY ANDY SMITH

This occupation, which the capitalist media have completely blacked out, could, if victorious, make all the difference to the fight against the Tories job-cutting strategy. Maximum solidarity with it throughout the Labour Movement must be mobilised. The bosses plans to starve the workforce into submission must be countered by a flood of financial assistance from every union branch, shop stewards committees, Trades Councils and Labour Party. But financial support alone will not win.

Tom Williamson's belief that the bosses can be prevented from wholesale job slashing by the unions, compromising and accepting some voluntary redundancy hand outs is wrong. It is a recipe for dividing the workforce and permanently destroying jobs that are desperately needed by thousands of young workers. Furthermore, the acceptance of such terms now, will only give the bosses confidence when they carry through further rationalisation plans to sack more workers. The issue is not enforced versus voluntary redundancies. It is about saving workers jobs—defending them regardless of the profit priorities of the faceless millionaires who run the Hawk-

er Siddely empire, of which Gardners is a part.

The occupation reveals the real power of workers—the power to seize and control the plant and machinery of the bosses. While this control exists the bosses cannot conduct their affairs freely. This very fact should serve as a warning to all Gardners workers. The Hawker Siddely magnates will, when they need to, call in the police—the picket and occupation busters that police chief Anderton has been carefully training in the Manchester area. The occupation must be guarded. It has been a model of order and discipline. This must be extended to the establishment of selected teams whose function is to ensure the physical defence of the sit in. But Gardners workers alone will not be able to hold the factory indefinitely when the police battalions are moved in. Workers throughout Manchester, where dole queues are growing by the day and where the axe hangs over many thousands more jobs, must act to support this battle. When the bosses try to smash the occupation, mass pickets must greet them—a workers wall through which no boss, bailiff or policeman can pass. The strike committee should

seek to win pledges of this support now. Even then, the option of starving out the occupation exists. The tremendous cash support that has been given by the labour movement must be turned into active support that can hit at the Gardners bosses pockets. Total blacking of all customers and suppliers of Hawker Siddely must be enforced in every affected workplace. A campaign to win solidarity strike action from all other sections of the combine, not just from other diesel engine workers, must be launched. Other sections of workers can and must be won to taking supportive strike action. Such a determined defence of an occupation will strengthen the confidence of every worker, will make clear to the Tories that our jobs come before their profits.

If the Gardners bosses claim that

there is no money in the kitty, that the market has fallen through etc., then the workers response must be two fold. First the right of elected committees from the workforce to inspect the books of the Hawker Siddely company must be fought for. On the basis of this workers will be able to judge the extent of mismanagement and wheeling and dealing that has gone on. The inspection of all the accounts and ledgers will show how the management and major shareholders pocketed the wealth created by the workers. It would expose the way in which the Gardners bosses have re-directed the wealth into the banks and into more lucrative areas of investment. Seeing this chicanery for what it is will show workers how to challenge the pointless arguments about the viability or otherwise of the firm. It will demonstrate the truth that the

bosses thirst for profit determines their every action—not building up industry or supplying human needs. Fighting for this demand, will lay the best possible basis for workers control of a fully nationalised company in which every job is preserved and with no compensation at all going to the former bosses.

Such answers point the way to a decisive victory for Gardners workers. But to make certain of this the leadership of the works committee at Gardners must get its own house in order. It must fully involve the rank and file in decision making, negotiations and the planning of tactics. It must do this via regular sovereign mass meetings and a daily occupation bulletin, open for contribution from all members of the occupation. It is not enough that the energy of the rank and file is used for collections, marches etc. Their power is the key to victory. They must decide how to use that power. A first step in using it to secure victory would be for the occupation to convene a conference of workplace delegates from throughout the Manchester area with the object of establishing a local action council to lead and co-ordinate this and other struggles against the bosses and their government.

ANDY SMITH INTERVIEWS TOM WILLIAMSON, CHAIRMAN OF THE GARDNERS WORKS' COMMITTEE.

The Gardners occupation is a clear example that the bosses' attacks can be fought with militant direct action.

Workers Power asked Tom Williamson, chairman of the Gardners Works' Committee and of the CSEU committee about the occupation.

WP: Could you tell us about the immediate background to the current dispute?

TW: Out of the blue, in June, just after we had put in a 20% annual wage claim, we were told that several of our customers were feeling the pinch and that it was necessary to go on a four day week. We agreed to do this, on the basis of the short time working compensation agreement. In August the Works Committee met with management where they informed us that 700 had to be made redundant before December 31st. The information was taken to a mass meeting at which, out of the 2,400 workforce, with only 6 against, a vote was taken to fight the enforced redundancies until they were withdrawn, using industrial action if necessary. At a second mass meeting, this position was re-endorsed by a 60-40 majority. Management refused to back down, arguing that the redundancies were necessary if the company was to operate on an economic basis.

We had no alternative then but to call a dispute. The departmental meetings were held at which the decision was taken to sit in. That was on the 3rd of October and that has been the situation ever since. On Saturday 25th October, 590 people received their redundancy notices, the rest of the workforce received letters offering voluntary redundancy terms.

Financial support is now arriving in a regular stream and accelerating throughout the UK. Acceleration has taken place as a result of the strike being made official. Offers of speakers at meetings, rallies etc., have been overwhelming.

We are trying to keep everyone happy by organising indoor activities, darts, dominoes etc.

WP: Has there been any problem with the constant involvement of the mass of the membership? For example, you say six or seven hundred are involved each day has that remained constant? Are people feeling the pinch and what do you think will happen next?

TW: It has been constant, people are feeling the pinch, but this company is very much a local concern, i.e. they live within a short travelling distance of the plant and so it is relatively easy for them to get in.

WP: And are you producing a regular newsletter?

TW: We have produced several newsletters since the start everyone is quite happy with them plus the fact that we do occasionally speak to them, if anything happens, or if there is anything with regard to Social Security, and all that they would like to hear about we do tell them every morning over the loudspeakers in the canteen.

WP: At this point how do you see a victory being achieved? What are the next steps?

TW: We hope obviously that we will achieve some sort of a victory out of this, even if at the end of the day some people do take early retirement, or volunteer. We can't stop them from coming forward. We would like to be able to negotiate some very good severance payments, over and above the normal redundancy payments. Our people who are in their sixties would like, possibly, to go. It was not our intention to negotiate any severance payments because we wanted to resist redundancies, certainly enforced redundancies, because they are getting at people they don't like.

WP: Apart from negotiations, what sort of action do you think is necessary? Do you think the AUEW's official support can be used? Would you like to see other actions being taken? For example solidarity strikes? Does the action need to be stepped up?

TW: Well, I wouldn't like to see any further hardship for our colleagues in the area — but I do know there is to be a Confed meeting at the beginning of November, of all stewards in AUEW area 11. I don't know what they will decide — but for sure it will include financial support on a regular weekly basis, with a district levy.

WP: How far do you see your action against redundancies as being political?

TW: It wasn't our intention for it to be political in this factory, but I recognise now that it is going to be.

BIRMETAL: Take cue from Gardners

By Tim Bell

The Birmid Qualcast Group is busy asset stripping. In the West Midlands it is planning to close down a number of its plants. It began its offensive in earnest last spring when a series of disputes led it to serving dismissal notices in June on 700 workers at Birmetal in Birmingham. This was part of a plan which involved selling its order books for £80 million to British Aluminium and the selling off of agricultural land and warehouses to parasitic property speculators.

The workers have not sat back idle while this has been going on. The dismissal notices were originally preceded by running disputes involving an overtime ban and a ban on dispatches last April. Pickets were put on the gates in August and an 11 man strike committee was set up. The major action that the committee has organised to date was a demonstration in Birmingham on October 17th. Despite terrible weather several hundred trade unionists turned up to support the Birmetal strikers.

At a rally after the march union dignitaries talked tough but offered little in the way of a strategy to win. The AUEW official, Bill Jordan, who despite promises has not yet made the dispute official, ignored the issue of jobs and said that insurance and unemployment benefits were the main problem. Obviously the fact that the state, via Case Law laid down in 1926 is denying the strikers any benefits, does make the issue important. But this question should be being considered not as the central one but as a subsidiary problem within the framework of a fighting plan to ensure that Birmetal workers are not put on benefit

permanently—through losing their jobs.

Instead the mass picket in October called to stop the 225 T&GWU white collar scabs from getting in to wind down the plant, was not built for by the officials or their friends on the strike committee. In fact one member who did build for the picket, has since been the victim of a successful campaign by the officials, to oust him from the strike committee.

The Birmetals strikers must win. The bosses aim of converting the West Midlands into an industrial wasteland must be checked. The determination to do this exists. The Birmetals strikers have been fighting for many months surviving on the donations from other workers. The union officials, the Bill Jordans of the world, who have been wasting time pleading with MPs such as the Tory Cadbury, over the benefits issue, are false friends. The strikers must build a leadership that wants to win.

The Birmetal workers must take actions that will hurt the bosses. They must take their cue from Gardners. One day occupations, which have been attempted at Birmetals, are of no real use. With the aid of a mass picket a full scale occupation to impound the bosses property must be launched until every job at Birmetals is guaranteed and protected for the future through workers control of hiring and firing, of manning and production speed levels. The Birmetals struggle must be backed up now by total blacking of all products and supplies throughout the Birmid empire and through a fight to bring other sections of the combine out on strike in solidarity action.

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