

# workers power

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**INSIDE: BOLIVIA**  
**MARX CENTENARY**  
**ENTRYISM 1949-54**

## LABOUR RIGHT MOVE IN FOR THE KILL

**THE BERMONDSEY BYE** election ripped the mask off the face of several grand old British institutions, the 'free press', 'parliamentary democracy' and the various factions that make up the Labour Party. What it revealed was not a pretty sight.

Throughout the campaign, the sewer press deluged the electorate of Bermondsey with red-baiting, gay-baiting, jingoistic and chauvinist trash.

This was ably provided by that fountainhead of filth the 'real Labour' candidate, John O'Grady. He and Mellish, the Dockland Developers, amply revealed themselves as the true face of the party of Golding and Healey.

Here it should be noted that the Centre-Right NEC could expel five members of the Militant Tendency, each an unquestionable labour loyalist, whilst John O'Grady is still a member of the Labour Party. There can be no doubt that, had he been elected, he would have received a warm reception from his old

cronies in the bar of the House of Commons.

Two lessons can be learned here. Firstly, the Labour movement is horrifically vulnerable to the enormous lie machine of the millionaire media. This campaign was a model of how the ruling class can orchestrate all its means of disinformation. The Sun, the Star, the Mail and the Standard spewed forth the dirty torrent of lies, slander and innuendo to feed the prejudices of the most ignorant and backward strata of the electorate. The Mirror, the Guardian and the TV stations dealt with the 'respectable' case against Labour — its divisions, its being taken over by extremists, the fact that the real (i.e. right wing) leaders did not approve of Tatchell and so on. All of them ably used the paid-for opinion polls to railroad a last minute surge of support for the Liberal-Alliance.

All of this completely swamped the frail craft of a local Labour Party with its policies and its manifestos. In this way the hollow sham that parliamentary democracy now is was also revealed,

so much so that the TV and the 'respectable' press, (Guardian and Times) like the whitened sepulchres that they are, castigated the popular press and virtually apologised to Tatchell — after the event. Of equal sincerity and value were the words of protest and comfort from the Labour leader Michael Foot. Having opened the floodgate on Tatchell with his House of Commons outburst, stung out of him by Thatcher and cheered on by the Tory backbenchers, Foot now sheds crocodile tears. Perhaps, however, the tears are for himself since, by poetic justice, he is the next victim to feed the hungry maw of the resurgent Right.

The last element to be unmasked by Bermondsey was the 'new Left'. A slander campaign from the press and from Labour's right wing, a rotten Labour record in Bermondsey that stretches back decades and the obvious inability of the Party to lead an effective fight against Thatcher, all combined to defeat Tatchell. It must be said, however, that the 'new' constituency left presents no radical alternative for working people.

Tatchell fought the campaign on a Labour version of 'community politics', 'houses with gardens', 're-open St. Olave Hospital' issues which, although very worthy in themselves, are dwarfed by the gigantic threats facing working class people.

With 18% unemployment in the constituency this should have been the issue at the centre of a campaign that, in addition, should have taken up the whole gamut of Tory attacks on the working class' historic gains and its organisations, the attacks on immigrants, and the war drive.

In essence, the mass disillusion with Labour stems from the humiliating impotence of the whole official Labour movement in the face of Thatcher and Tebbit. The TUC has allowed Tebbit and Prior to prepare legal shackles for the unions with scarcely a protest. Both the party and the unions have stood by and watched as at least four million people have been thrown onto the dole. Even the couple of street parades that they organised terrified the parliamentary and trade union mandarins. They swore that they would never again give their followers a forum in which to shout them down with calls for action. The whole PLP gave Thatcher the green light for her Bloody Falklands adventure. They all failed miserably to mobilise the Labour movement against it when it could have been stopped. Now, with the 'Falklands Factor' (revivified chauvinism) on her side, wreathed in the laurels of victory, Thatcher pays Foot back in his own patriotic coin.

Only the struggles, all too often isolated and betrayed, of the steelworkers, the hospital workers and the waterworkers have kept the battle flags of the working class flying. These mass struggles, however, hold the key to turning the tide. They have repeatedly opened up the possibility of a counter-offensive. Yet the leaders of the Labour movement seem hell-bent on giving Thatcher every opportunity to launch her new offensive in her 'second term'. This, it appears, will include 'depoliticisation' of the unions by effectively outlawing the political levy, enormous legal penalties for strikes in vital services, the reduction of the health service to a paupers' charity and indentured labour at dole rates for the young unemployed.



Healy

It is against this background that the crisis in the Labour Party must be seen. Michael Foot has served his purpose for the Right. They and the MP's of the 'Centre-Left' are busy anonymously 'whispering' to the media that he is a disaster and must go. They plan to shanghai the democratic process for electing the leader. If Darlington is lost (and it would only take 0.55% swing to the Tories) the union and parliamentary godfathers will call on the hapless Foot and make him a proposal he cannot refuse — to get out, with their praise and blessings.

The deal being hatched is a Healey leadership with the slimy opportunist Kinnock as deputy. Whether the bevy of other right wing aspirants, Hattersley, Shore, Silkin will allow Kinnock to jump the queue is another question. Such a deal would be followed by a snap special conference or electoral college as a one horse plebiscite to enthrone the regained dominance of the old gang.

If any left candidate stood she or he would be steamrollered by the block vote and even lose the support of the terrified constituency parties who fear that Labour seats will fall like ninepins. That is why Benn is digging defensive trenches around Foot. In this he is being followed by nearly the whole of the Left.

This is a fatal mistake, quite of a piece with the first surrender and secret truce agreed at Bishop's Stortford which started the Right's advance. Foot has been, from the start, and is now, a scarecrow behind which the Right hides, they have pushed him forward time and again. With the destruction of Tatchell his use is nearly over for them. He cannot be 'supported' into fighting against the Right. A few words from Healey, Hattersley, Basnett and Evans and he will go. They will say, Michael, you have lost the confidence of the PLP and the unions' and he will go, despite all Benn's oaths of loyalty and circular letters. In fact, only one thing prevents them, the lingering uncertainty about whether the Left might perhaps fight

Golding

back, might perhaps force an election and a debate within the broader Labour movement.

There is little hope that they will do so, yet that is just what the rank and file must demand that they do. To do otherwise is to connive at Healey's return to the leadership.

What is to be Done?

First, and before anything else, the fight against Thatcher must be taken up. Without an upsurge in the class struggle itself the shadow show of the innerparty struggle will result in a victory for the Right, come what may. The parliamentary and TUC Lilliputians can dance up and down on the working class movement only as long as it is prostrate. If, following the waterworkers, the miners go into battle and win then the general lurch to the right will be halted. This means an all-out effort to mobilise the unions and, alongside them, the local Labour Parties in a massive campaign on unemployment. Foot and Murray even tried to prevent any official support for the respectable People's March for Jobs, planned for April. If real forces are mobilised around this march we can make the unemployed visible, raise the millions of unemployed to their feet and rock the Thatcher government to its foundations. Around the various wages struggles, the fight against the cuts and the resistance to the anti-Soviet war preparations, the tide can be turned.

To do this we must put the Labour movement on a war footing. In all areas where several sections of workers are in struggle, attempts at liaison and solidarity can culminate in the creation of councils of action. Local Labour parties should turn out to these struggles, breaking the hypnotic obsession with electioneering. Real councils of action should involve all working class political organisations as well as workplace based union organisations.

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## SMASH ALL RACIST LAWS!



Last month William Whitelaw's latest racist immigration regulations came into force. Toughened up to win the support of the Tory backwoodsmen, they place yet more restrictions on immigration.

Together with the Nationality Act, the regulations will serve to increase the wilful campaign of deportations that the Tories have launched against the black community in Britain. In Birmingham Muhammad Idrish faces the prospect of being thrown out of the country because he no longer lives with his wife. In Sheffield, a leading figure in the Bengali commun-

ity, Ranjit Chakravorty, is under deportation threat.

Thousands more face a similar fate. In a period of high unemployment it is vital that the Labour movement closes ranks against the Tories, not against their Black and Asian brothers and sisters. All immigration controls play into the hands of the Tories by suggesting that workers and bosses have a common 'national' interest to protect. They are invariably used against black and Asian workers.

They divide workers the better to attack all of us. They must be opposed and fought by all workers' organisations. Trade union and labour movement bodies can begin this fight by sending big delegations, with banners, to the Campaign Against Racist Laws demonstration in London on March 27th. ■

# A REVOLUTION DISARMED

BOLIVIA IS A landlocked country of no more than 6 million people, with the majority of its population, about 60%, still working on the land as peasant farmers. Historically it has been one of the countries most exploited by imperialism. Its economy was massively dependent on the export of tin to the imperialist powers - most importantly the USA. Exports of tin amounted to 75% of all exports by the 1920s and still amount to over 50% today. Tin production by the turn of the century had come to be dominated by three massive family firms - Aramayo, Hochschild and Patiño - which controlled 80% of the industry and dominated the government. This oligarchy, known as the "Rosca" came to be based outside of Bolivia, firmly integrated into the business communities of the imperialist heartlands.

The enormous superprofits extracted by imperialism from Bolivia and the resistance to paying taxes of the expatriate "Rosca" kept the Bolivian state chronically impoverished. It was completely at the beck and call of imperialism and cruelly subject to the vagaries of the world tin market. The 1920s and 30s saw Bolivia racked by economic crises as the world slump produced a dramatic fall in tin prices. The failure of Bolivian capitalism produced a number of movements, often based in the army and drawing support from the financially squeezed urban petit-bourgeoisie, which attempted to challenge the grip of the "Rosca" and negotiate a better deal with imperialism. The MNR (Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario) founded in the 1940s was the most influential nationalist party during this period and became the leading force in the 1952 revolution.

Starting as an attempted putsch by the MNR and sections of the military, the April 1952 revolution became an armed insurrection led by the most powerful section of the Bolivian working class - the Bolivian tin miners. It broke the army regime and placed Paz Estenssoro and the MNR in power. The MNR government was a capitalist government, despite its revolutionary nationalist rhetoric. Under the pressure of massive peasant land seizures it carried out a major land reform programme in April 1953. Forced by miners' strikes and demonstrations, it was compelled to nationalise the three major mining groups of the "Rosca" and form COMIBOL, the state mining company.

But the regime exposed the chronic political weaknesses of the Bolivian working class and its parties. In a situation approaching dual power, where the regime was a highly unstable one, the left was unable to win the masses from the MNR. Indeed, it did the opposite. The COB supported the government, having five "worker ministers" installed alongside the MNR.

## THE ROLE OF THE P.O.R.

The POR, at that time a united party, wholeheartedly supported the entry of the "worker ministers" into the government. They extended critical support to it as a government in so far as it was progressive and "fought the Rosca." A resolution of the POR 10th Congress (June 1953) reprinted without criticism by Lora in later years states: "Far from advancing the slogan of the overthrow of the Paz Estenssoro regime we support it in order that it resists the offensive of the Rosca and we call on the international proletariat to defend unconditionally the Bolivian revolution and its transitional government." (G. Lora, "Bolivia: de la naissance du POR a L'Assemblée Populaire", p.35). Whilst it is justified that revolutionaries would defend arms in hand any such democratic government against domestic or imperialist reactionary attack, it is wrong to give it political support. In fact, the POR failed to expose it as a bourgeois government incapable of fighting reaction, failed to call for its replacement by a revolutionary workers' and peasants' government and failed to raise to the fore agitation for the arming of the workers and peasants and the dissolution of the standing army.

The failure to seize the revolutionary opportunities afforded by the April 1952 revolution was to cost the Bolivian workers and peasants dear. The government demobilised the masses, rebuilt the army and in alliance with the Bolivian CP crushed the left in the COB. By 1964, the army was sufficiently confident to strike at the MNR government and re-introduce military rule. The regime of General Barrientos, which was marked by its subservience to imperialism and its repression of the trade unions, involving it in a series of massacres of mine workers, lasted until 1969 when the general was killed in a helicopter crash. He was replaced by General Ovando.

It is rare that the same political leaders are offered a second chance to carry out their respective programmes. Yet 1970 in Bolivia offered just such a chance to the leaders who claimed to be fighting for socialism in Bolivia. It was a chance that proved that they had learnt nothing from their previous mistakes.

The events of October 1970 bore a striking similarity to those of April 1952. General Ovando, under the impact of the apparent success of the

This article covers the revolutionary events that shook Bolivia between October 1970 and August 1971. We offer no apologies for examining events that took place more than ten years ago in a small country in South America. First, those events are rich in lessons for revolutionaries seeking to develop a programme which can lead to victory and working class power in the imperialised world. Secondly, many of the leading figures and parties in this period of struggle, Juan Lechin, leader of the COB (Bolivian Trade Union Centre), the Bolivian Communist Party (PCB), Guillermo Lora, leader of POR (Lora), Hugo Gonzales Moscoso leader of POR (Gonzales) are still contenders for leadership within the Bolivian workers' movement. They will undoubtedly continue to play an important role, following the return to civilian government in September last year. Therefore an examination of the politics which inform their parties, and their record during the revolutionary crisis of 1970/71, has much more than academic interest. Parts of this article are taken from a forthcoming book published by Workers Power and the Irish Workers Group on the Fourth International (see advertisement elsewhere in this paper.) We invite supporters of either Lora's organisation, POR(MASAS), affiliated to the Fourth Internationalist Tendency or of Gonzales's POR (COMBATE), affiliated to the USFI, to reply to the criticisms made in this article.

nationalist generals in Peru, proceeded to try and renegotiate a better deal with US imperialism. The nationalisation of Gulf Oil was to earn him the enmity of US imperialism and ensure an attempted right-wing coup. On October 4th 1970, General Rogelio Miranda obliged the US government and staged an attempted coup. However, sections of the army hesitated and the COB called a general strike against the coup attempt. Miners armed with dynamite poured into La Paz as the working class responded massively to the call. A "Comando Político" was formed to organise the resistance. This political command was made up of trade union leaders from the COB, including Lechin; organisations such as the Student Federation and Peasants of the Independent Bloc, as well as political parties; the MNR, the PCB and POR (Lora), and others.

## "LEFT" BONAPARTISM

Having failed to achieve a swift coup the army found itself facing a crisis similar to April 1952. It had to head off at all costs another defeat for the army at the hands of the armed workers. It chose to put forward its "left" bonapartist face, in the figure of General Juan Jose Torres whose base lay in the airforce. Torres announced himself in rebellion against both Miranda and Ovando, making a broadcast from the El Alto airforce base declaring for "an anti-imperialist revolutionary government of soldiers, workers and students." Time magazine revealed how this "rebellion" was organised with the connivance of Ovando: "After meeting with Ovando, General Torres sped to a military base outside La Paz and quietly rallied left support. When leftist Air Force pilots, flying vintage Mustang fighters strafed the presidential palace, taking care to fire only into the air - it was all over." (Time 19.10.70).

In fact the general strike had already broken the coup, and Torres provided a way out for the army, even if it meant temporarily risking a "left" general, while they reorganised their forces. Torres was quick to oblige. On assuming office he offered Miranda a post "commensurate with his military rank" (reported in Le Monde, 26.10.70) while General Roque Teran, a renowned right-winger, was appointed commander in chief.

While Torres was reassuring the military, and in fact assuring his own future downfall, he was also

building up his reputation as a left nationalist amongst the masses. On his inauguration, in front of a crowd estimated at 40,000 in the Plaza Murrillo, La Paz, he declared: "We have signed a pact of honour with the COB and Universities to build a truly Bolivian and popular government." (Quoted in Bohemia, 16.10.70). Indeed the first part of this was true. The following day Lechin announced: "We give full support to General Torres, to whose government we have appealed to purge itself of pro-american elements and from which we demand constitutional liberties and guarantees." (Intercontinental Press, 19.10.70)

The Political Command had been in negotiations with Torres since the first day of the coup. On coming to power Torres offered the Command 25% of the ministries in the new government (making sure of course the key ministries of the interior, finance, etc were not on offer.) Later this was increased to 50%.

Despite the previous opposition of the miners' unions to a return to the "negative experience of so called co-rule" which represented "a betrayal of the historic role of the workers' movement" the majority of the Political Command jumped at the opportunity to enter the government. What is quite clear is that even the POR (Lora) supported the entry of "worker ministers" into the Torres government, repeating their errors of 1952. Lora makes this clear in his own description of events: "But the opportunist tendency was brought under control since the Comando Político was persuaded (by the POR? WP) to attach such conditions for accepting the ministries that they would have been effectively removed from the control of the President. Thus the ministers would be appointed by the Comando, which would mandate them and recall them at any time; a political advisor would work alongside each minister etc. However, this experiment was never put to the test, since Torres withdrew his offer." (A History of the Bolivian Labour Movement, by G. Lora.) This interesting "experiment", as Lora chooses to call it, was nothing new at all. It was no more than an agreement to enter a bourgeois government and had it been realised would have been no different from the Menshevik entry into the Russian Provisional Government; and this after the experience of 1952!



Bolivian tin miners

A revolutionary policy should have involved a fight within the Political Command for the workers' and peasants' organisations to take power. It should have argued to break off negotiations with Torres, to kick out the MNR, and for a call to every factory, mine and workplace to elect delegates to local soviets and to a national soviet, convened by the political command. It should have called on workers to form their own militias and for the formation of soldiers' committees in the army, these to send delegates to the soviets. It should have fought for a workers' and peasants' government directly accountable to the soviets, in order to open the road to the formation of a proletarian state. The POR (Lora) did none of this and the Political Command effectively ceded power after the aborted negotiations on "power sharing". Defending this position at a later date Lora demonstrates a chronic tailism with regard to the role of the revolutionary party and its relation to the masses. Speaking of October 1970 he says: "At this time to put out the slogan for seizing power would have been the idea of a madman. This slogan did not correspond to the dominant mood of the masses who did not yet feel it an immediate need to build and construct their own government." (De la Naissance du POR a l'Assemblée Populaire.) That is, as long as the masses supported Torres it was madness to raise the need for their own government!

The explanation of the POR(Lora)'s failure to raise these demands during this crucial period lies in its opportunist use of the anti-imperialist united front tactic. As in 1952, with its position of "critical support" to Paz Estenssoro, the POR confused the defence of a bourgeois government against the threat of a right wing imperialist-backed coup, with extending political support to such a government. This position had led to its acceptance of "worker ministers" in 1952. It actually meant maintaining an anti-imperialist front with a section of the bourgeoisie on a strategic basis.

There is further evidence that the POR(Lora) did little to challenge the illusions of the Bolivian masses in the left Bonapartist Torres. On the crucial question of arming the workers and developing slogans and actions directed towards the breaking up of the bourgeois army the POR either remained silent or sowed illusions in Torres. Lora obviously expected the "force of events" to compel Torres to arm the workers. He blandly stated: "Everyone (the POR included -? WP) supposed that Torres, a friend of Ovando, would in view of the difficult situation he confronted have no alternative but to arm the people, as the only way of strengthening his own position. But as time passed the hope grew fainter that a clash between opposing sectors of the military would enable the masses to arm themselves."

Lora and the POR were calmly waiting for a clash in the army between "progressive" and "reactionary" forces, rather than fighting for the arming of the workers and the organisation of rank and file soldiers for a sharp clash with Torres. Yet, Torres had kept the army intact and its dyed-in-the-wool coup-makers in the general staff. The burning issue, literally in a life and death struggle for the working class, was the struggle to break up the army as a weapon of reaction, to win the rank and file soldiers to the side of the workers, thereby guaranteeing that the workers would be armed and prepared for the inevitable coup attempt. By the time the POR (Lora) decided that Torres was not going to arm the workers it was too late. The army was making ready to strike back.

## THE PEOPLE'S ASSEMBLY

In January 1971 the right wing struck back and attempted to overthrow Torres. The coup based on General Banzer's cadets and elements of the Ingavi regiment, which had been the backbone of the October 1970 coup, again was met with a general strike in support of Torres. The coup collapsed, while 50,000 gathered in La Paz in answer to the COB's call for a general mobilisation. To chants of "Torres, socialism, socialism, socialism," Torres' reply that "I will do what the people want me to do" was greeted with wild applause.

A direct result of the coup attempt was the call for a "People's" or "Popular" Assembly, put out by the Political Command. The Assembly, when it was convened, was to have a majority of workers' representatives. Workers' organisations had 132 or 60% of delegates, 23 came from the Independent Peasants Confederation, 53 were allocated to petit-bourgeois elements such as professionals, teachers, students etc. As the name implies, the People's Assembly was seen as the representative of an anti-imperialist united front. Indeed the MNR, the grave-diggers of the 1952 revolution, were only excluded when Torres attacked them for their involvement in the January attempted coup! The political parties of the Political Command, all of whom were to be represented in the Assembly, each developed their own perspective for the Assembly. The Stalinist PCB wanted to build it as a popular front on the Chilean model in order to mobilise support for Torres. The POR(Lora) saw it as part of a "Revolutionary Anti-Imperialist United Front" but at the same time declared it an organ of "dual power and a soviet-type organisation, which has made for the predominance of the proletariat in the revolutionary process."

In fact the Assembly was a hybrid body. It was a proto-soviet whose worker representatives could have been transformed, under the correct political

# International Women's Day/Broad Left WOMEN WORKERS BEAR BRUNT OF CRISIS

THIS YEAR'S INTERNATIONAL Women's Day takes place against a background of intense attacks by the Tories on working class women. The effects of the recession and four years of Tory rule, have reinforced the social inequality and oppression that women suffer under capitalism. As well as the low pay and job insecurity that working women endure, the extensive attacks on the welfare state have placed an increasingly intolerable burden on their day to day lives.

Over 60% of women workers are employed in low paid jobs - clerical, cleaning, catering and personal service. Two in five of all working women are in part-time jobs. This explains why, overall, female employment fell by 7%, as compared with 9% for men between mid-1980 and 1982. The industries (mainly public sector) in which women workers are the majority, have not been hit as hard as those in which there is a majority of men. Thatcher has signalled that she will put that right if she gets another term of office.

In the manufacturing industries women have been hit harder than men. The reactionary principle of "women out first" has been put into effect by the bosses. Between March 1980 and 1981, for example, job losses amongst women in manufacturing were 12.7% as against 8.9% amongst men. The rate of job losses amongst part-time women workers was a staggering 16%. Many women shunted out of work do not get counted amongst the unemployed. Because they do not register as unemployed, a seemingly pointless thing to do because most women would not be entitled to benefits, they simply disappear. It is estimated that the official figures for female unemployment (26% of the total in 1982) do not include some one million unregistered women.

The chronic lack of state-provided childcare facilities is another factor that forces women out of work. With Thatcher's "Family" report and stress on "Victorian values and virtues" the pressure on women to give up jobs and look after children will be stepped up. In 1979 a Gallup poll survey found that nearly 1 in 5 women with children under 11 had had to give up work to look after them. The lack of facilities for the under-fives is even worse. At its peak in the late 1970s state provision amounted to 1 place in a day nursery, 1 place in a nursery school and 3½ places in nursery classes per 100 children. Since 1982 the number of places has declined and nursery building programmes have been axed. Even in nursery education, which covers 215,000 under fives, children are looked after for

only approximately 2½ hours per day, in term time. This limits the ability of mothers to do even part-time work.

Thatcher's policies are aimed at making mothers guilty at using the inadequate state childcare facilities that do exist. The day nurseries and state registered childminding services run by the DHSS are regarded by the government as unfortunate necessities for "inadequate" mothers. They are being cut to the bone. Their staff are poorly trained and badly paid. Moreover, working class mothers have to cough up fees of between £10-£15 per week, for the use of these services.

The Tory siege on the welfare state is also hitting working women the hardest. The deliberations of the "Family Policy Group" suggest that the worst is yet to come. The policies being proposed aim to: "encourage families ... to re-assume responsibilities taken on by the state; for example, responsibility for the disabled, the elderly, unemployed 16 year olds." Alongside these are policies designed to "encourage women to stay at home." Working class women are to be driven out of paid jobs and forced to suffer the consequences of hospital closures, youth unemployment and a social services system completely vandalised by the Tories.

This strategy is already having devastating effects, via the nauseating campaign for "community care" espoused by Tory Health Minister Fowler. An Equal Opportunities Commission survey recorded that some 1,200,000 people, mainly women, have to stay at home to look after a disabled dependent, while a further 1,600,000 are involved in part-time care for dependents. Married women who give up their jobs to look after disabled relatives are not even eligible for an invalid care allowance. They lose an income but have to pay the costs for an invalid.

Cuts in old people's homes means that families, and especially mothers, take on the lion's share of responsibility for looking after old people. Since 1976 9,000 places in old people's homes have been cut. The London borough of Newham, which has above average facilities for the elderly, revealed that 42% of old people in the borough were cared for by relatives and, of these, only 5% were ever seen by the social services.

The effects of the cuts on services have been to undermine the right of women to work, indirectly. The direct attack on women's jobs within the public sector is now beginning to really get underway. Latest figures for the public sector show that the proportion of job cuts due to privatisation rose from 8% in 1980 to 23% in 1981. With the government lining up the NHS, Civil Service and Local Government departments for a combination of straight cuts and privatisation, more jobs will disappear. For example, Birmingham's proposal to contract out school-cleaning (exclusively women employees) will mean



Picture: Derek Speirs (IFL)

the immediate loss of 80 jobs and insecurity for the remaining 3,000 school cleaners in the city. In school meals women workers also face massive job losses. Convenience foods and cash-cafeterias, introduced since 1980, have destroyed thousands of jobs. The introduction of cash-cafeterias in primary schools, by 15 authorities will lead to thousands more redundancies. Three counties have dispensed with the provision of mid-day meals in all of their primary schools altogether!

The co-ordinated assault on a woman's right to work, means a poverty line existence for thousands of families. A huge number of working women are only able to get part-time work. The average hourly

rate of pay for this work is a meagre 58% of the average hourly rate for male workers. The average weekly pay of one large section of part-time women workers - council manual workers - is a pathetic £28.78! The desperate need for money means that part-time women workers can be manipulated by employers, and their attempts at organisation can be undermined by the spectre of unemployment. Working women, particularly those with children, are in a Catch-22. Money is needed for day to day necessities, but domestic responsibilities, and the gradual disappearance of an adequate social and child care service, puts enormous restrictions on the ability of women to do even part-time work. Yet, without some previous income from work, women will not qualify for any state benefits. The familial strains caused by this poverty trap are becoming acute. The forthcoming report from the "Study Commission on the Family" shows that more than 50% of all 2 parent families with dependent children rely on the earnings of both parents. Further every one in eight families is a one parent family and almost 90% of single parents are women. Almost half of the existing one-parent families depend on state benefits. The Tories plan to deal with this problem by encouraging "responsible and self-reliant behaviour". And to do this they will be cutting benefits and child care facilities!

Working women have been hit hard in the present recession. But against the Tories, and the bosses, they have fought back. In doing so they have had to confront the indifference or sabotage of the trade union bureaucracy. At Lee Jeans the women who occupied won because of their militancy and determination which was able to overcome official indifference. The struggles of other women workers have, however, been sabotaged. In Kent school dinner ladies struck against an attempt to reduce holiday pay and scrap half-pay holiday retainers on the part of the council. NUPE insisted on selective strike action. It then called the action off and the official recommended acceptance of the new council contracts. Finally, when the women refused to accept them, NUPE took the council to court. While the court ruled against the council, there is no guarantee that the council's plans have been defeated. Indeed NUPE negotiated a deal to ease through redundancies and cuts. Women workers who fight are clearly up against the union leaders as well as the bosses and government.

To overcome these problems and launch a fight-back on all fronts it is vital that militant women are organised within and across the unions and workplaces into a unified, mass movement that can draw in the unorganised and therefore weaker sections of women from the estates and communities. Such a working class movement is vital to ensure that the unions are opened up to women workers and transformed into bodies that can fight for their interests. Meetings in works' time, special sections in the unions and creche facilities can all help to achieve this.

Only such a movement could fight effectively against the low pay, job insecurity and unemployment, and the cuts, that contribute to the oppression suffered by working women. By mobilising thousands of women workers around each and every partial struggle by the working class, such a movement can and should play a central role in fighting to rid the world of capitalism, its governments and the oppression of women that it perpetuates.

by Verna Care

## Capturing the block vote - or democratising it?

ON FEBRUARY 19th over one hundred delegates from assorted Broad Lefts and trade union branches gathered for a meeting organised by the Broad Left Organising Committee (BLOC) to discuss "Democratising the Block Vote". The conference was dominated by supporters of Militant.

The composition of the conference showed that it had more than its fair share of representatives of non-affiliated white collar unions (NUT, NALGO, CPSA,) or ones with a low percentage of affiliated members (ASTMS). By contrast the largest unions in the blue collar sector were under-represented - AUEW 8, NUR UCATT and NUPE 5 and the TGWU 3. The conference also had more than its fair share of full-time officials.

Dominated by white collar activists who live in constant fear of their members' Tory proclivities, and by full-time officials who live in fear of their members' militancy, it is small wonder that the conference turned out to be about capturing, not democratising, the block vote.

As Phil Holt, secretary of BLOC, wrote in a document prepared for the conference: "What is needed is 'to improve current practices, not to question the principles of the system.'" The unquestionable principles so sacred to Bro. Holt and Co. allow the likes of Sid Weighel to cast all his 150,000 members votes in one go. Bro. Holt just doesn't like slippery Sid doing the casting. If only it was an honest Arthur all would be well. Well it wouldn't. Those who defend this corrupt system on the grounds that this unanimity somehow represents trade union principle are talking through their hats. United we stand means Unity in action. To reach a decision we need the right of the minorities to argue and become majorities. The present block vote represents either the general secretaries' views, that of the unions leading body, or the delegation itself - all of these "bodies" are chronically dominated by full-time, often life-elected officials. The millions of "affiliated members" have no say what-

soever. Indeed most of them don't know they are in the Labour Party! A handful of bureaucrats decide everything. It is this system of rotten boroughs that Tebbit knows is rotten-ripe for demolition. If Phil Holt's approach is the only positive alternative we can present to the union membership, then the Tories will be able to pose again - as they have over postal ballots - as the defenders of the ordinary union member against the arrogant usurping "unrepresentative" union officials or cliques of "militants." We must of course defend the right of the unions to fund the Labour Party as they choose and fight to keep the state and the courts' out of the Labour movement. But workers' democracy in the unions and in the Labour Party is 100 times more valuable than individual leaders. That means allowing minorities and majorities to be fairly represented in union delegations to LP conference. The winner takes all, jackpot system enshrines the bureaucratic practice of non-consultation of the members.

What the organisers of BLOC cannot face squarely is that the trade unions themselves not just the block vote, are controlled by the bureaucrats and not the rank and file members. What is necessary is to transform our unions from top to bottom, transform them into fighting organisations able, and willing to defend the interests of their members. Only a strategy which links trade union democracy and rank and file control can tackle the question of the block vote.

Workers' Power supporters at the conference argued for just this. It was also with this in mind that a resolution was submitted to the conference by the AUEW RE/73 branch.

The resolution, moved by a Workers' Power supporter, called for "The election of all delegates to the Labour Party conference by branches at branches, and for the accountability of such delegates". Further it called for "The breaking of the undemocratic 'Block' character of the Block Vote" and for all votes to be "Cast according to the proportional system of voting." What really lay behind the objection to these "hairy ideas" as Phil Holt called them, was a deep mistrust of ordinary rank and file union members.

Those in Militant, and others who opposed our position are evading the real issue of how to win the unions back into the hands of the rank and file. Instead they want to concentrate on electioneering, and on "capturing the block vote."

The BLOC are repeating in the Labour Party the fundamental errors of the "broad lefts" in the unions - an extreme conservatism towards the existing union structures. In the AUEW the defence by the left of the branch ballot left them vulnerable to the "greater democracy" demagoguery of the Boyd-Duffy gang. Democracy restricted to only a minority of activists could not stand up against the passive parliamentary style "democracy" of postal ballots. An alternative to both is needed.

A fight in the workplaces, in the TU branches, on the other hand, for the election and accountability of all delegates to LP conference, at branch level, for the breaking up of the block vote, all this would prepare the unions for Tebbit's attack on their political affiliation and would seriously undermine the power base of the likes of Duffy and Chapple. And as a consequence undermine those whom they support; Healy, Shore, etc. Such a fight would naturally lead to the questioning of other customs and practices such as the control of union funds, appointment of officials and the whole direction and leadership of the unions themselves.

In such a climate those who showed themselves to be true fighters for workers' democracy would be the ones elected if such a campaign were successful. It would ensure that Labour Party matters were discussed regularly and the false division of political matters to the sphere of the Labour Party; industrial matters to the trade unions - which for years has hampered the Labour movement, would start to break down.

After three years of trying to transform the Labour Party by caucus action in the depleted CLP's the Lefts were steam rolled in 1982 by the block vote. Workers' Power had long warned that the key to LP democracy lay in the unions. Now some of the "democrats" including Benn, see an auxiliary role in a movement to capture the block vote. But here they turn again to the old bankrupt machine politicking that has demonstrated its uselessness in both the unions and the Labour Party. If BLOC is to be at all valuable it must break with these methods. The signs are not hopeful. ■

by Frank Oak

# Marx centenary

THE COMMUNIST MANIFESTO was the first major programmatic work of Marx and Engels. Written on the very eve of the 1848 revolutions it summarised the basic analysis and principles of Marxism. Based on a definite set of perspectives it also advanced a programme of demands intended to hasten the transition to the proletarian revolution.

The core of Marx's scientific communism had been developed in conflict with other 'socialisms' in the years preceding the manifesto. To such Utopian socialists as Robert Owen, Fourier and Saint-Simon, who saw the creation of a socialist society as being simply a question of moulding the material environment within which socialist man could flourish, Marx counterposed the view that man was himself an active participant in the historical process. In the now famous Theses on Feuerbach written in 1845 Marx crisply ridiculed the vulgar materialist assumptions of such Utopians:

"The materialist doctrine that men are products of circumstances and upbringing, and that therefore, changed men are products of other circumstances and changed upbringing, forgets that it is men that change circumstances and that the educator himself needs educating. Hence this doctrine necessarily arrives at dividing society into two parts, of which one is superior to society (in Robert Owen, for example)."

In contradistinction Marx had realised that it was the industrial proletariat that possessed the potential to overthrow existing society and create a communist society. In the Holy Family of 1845 Marx had declared, "When the proletariat is victorious it will not thereby become the absolute side of society because it can be victorious only by disavowing both itself and its antithesis. With this not only the proletariat, but also its conditional antithesis, private property, will disappear."

This bedrock tenet of Marxism sharply challenged the assumptions of all existing schools of socialism. Most were materially based on the artisans and small proprietors dispossessed or threatened by the forward march of modern capitalism. Their critique of capitalism - expounded most clearly by Proudhon - was a

moral one. Their alternative was a variety of means of preventing the consolidation of capitalism and the creation of a class of proletarian wage slaves.

The 1830s and 40s had seen the development of a conspiratorial tradition in Europe represented by Blanqui in France and Becker in Germany. For them the task was to perfect the means of organised insurrection so as to forestall the advance of capitalism's degradation and poverty. For Proudhon it was co-operation between the small proprietors in self-governing communes that would spare mankind the horrors of capitalist development. Marx had understood the material basis of these 'socialisms' and their historic bankruptcy: "So long as the proletariat is not yet sufficiently developed to constitute itself as a class, and consequently so long as the struggle itself of the proletariat with the bourgeoisie has not yet assumed a political character, and the productive forces are not yet sufficiently developed in the bosom of the bourgeoisie itself to enable us to catch a glimpse of the material conditions necessary for the emancipation of the proletariat and for the formation of a new society, these theoreticians are merely utopians, who, to meet the wants of the oppressed classes, improvise systems and go in search of a regenerating science." (The Poverty of Philosophy, early 1847)

As Marx was later to point out it was not he who 'discovered' the existence of class struggle. Bourgeois historians inspired by the struggle of their own class and awed by the potential power of the proletarian Chartist movement, were given to use the phrase in the early nineteenth century. Marx's great break with all past thinking was to understand the relationship between this class struggle and the goal of a classless Communist society. Marx was to explain this in a letter to Weydemeyer in 1852: "...and now to myself, no credit is due to me for discovering the existence of classes in modern society or the struggle between them. Long before me bourgeois historians had described the historical development of this class struggle and bourgeois economists, the economic anatomy of the classes. What I did that was new was to prove 1. that the existence of classes is only bound up with particular historical phases in the development of production, 2. that the class struggle necessarily leads to the dictatorship of the proletariat,

# THE ARCHITECT COMMUNIST

3. that this dictatorship itself only constitutes the transition to the abolition of all classes and to a classless society."

These discoveries had been codified in the German Ideology written in 1845. Here Marx and Engels had developed their understanding of human history as the history of a succession of class societies, property systems, organised to ensure production. The motor of history was the dialectic of the class struggle which drove history forward with revolutionary convulsions whenever the particular class society became a brake on the productive potential of that society. This enabled Marx and Engels to clarify their understanding of the state and law in class societies. "...the state is the form in which the individuals of a ruling class assert their common interests" and "In civil law the existing property relationships are declared to be the result of the general will." It enabled them to understand and situate the role of ideas in any given class society. "The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas i.e. the class which is the ruling material force of society, is at the same time its intellectual force."

In this context they materially rooted the programme of communism as the interest of the great class of propertyless workers that capitalism itself was collectivising in its factories and mines.

Marx's politics and philosophy had been systematised prior to the Communist Manifesto. He had also commenced his study of the laws governing the political economy of capitalism. While his greatest labours on this subject were still ahead of him, Marx's specific understanding of capitalism had

developed in conflict with the political economy of Proudhon and in a study of British political economy. In the "Poverty of Philosophy" Marx positively embraced the labour theory of value that had been developed by the classical school of British political economy. It is in the same work that Marx also recognised the enormous revolutionary potential of capitalism as a productive system. But it is necessary to remember that at this stage Marx was yet to undertake a major study of the short and long term tendencies to crisis, stability and expansion within the capitalist mode of production.

From 1844 Marx and Engels attempted to actively intervene in the various workers and socialist organisations of Western Europe. Of necessity this involvement entailed conflicts with those socialists who remained stamped in the mould of primitive utopianism. In 1846, for example, there was an attempt to organise a unified conference of the various circles of German communists. In the process Marx clashed bitterly with Weitling - the major figure amongst the German utopians. A self-educated tailor Weitling placed considerable stress on organising among the lumpen-proletariat in order to develop the necessary force for insurrection. He was to the belief that Christ was a communist and that religion itself was a necessity for the masses. Marx broke with this world of fantasy insurrections and utopian schemes, dedicating himself to propagandist work and to developing an international nucleus of co-thinkers organised in Communist Correspondence Committees with a central committee in Brussels. Within this network of correspondence stood the leaders of the revolutionary wing of Chartism - J. Harvey and Ernest Jones and the London based grouping of German communists the League of the Just.

## THE COMMUNIST LEAGUE

The League of the Just, which was renamed Communist League in 1847, reorganised itself so to make more effective propaganda amongst German workers and invited Marx and Engels to join their ranks. Marx and Engels were both able to attend the Second Congress in the Communist League's headquarters in London's Great Windmill Street in



Engels

November 1847. In ten days of discussion Marx and Engels were able to win significant support for their politics. They were mandated to produce a manifesto in December 1847 and by January 1848 it was ready for publication in German. This was the very eve of the February Paris uprising which signalled the start of the 1848 revolutions throughout Europe.

The Communist Manifesto poignantly summarised the conclusions of historical materialism: "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggle" Class struggle is the inevitable product of a class society which continues an "uninterrupted, hidden, now open fight, a fight that each time either in a revolutionary re-constitution of society at large, or in the common ruin of the contending classes." The world the Communist Manifesto add is a world in the throes of the forward march of bourgeoisie and which bears all the marks of the advance of capitalism. "The modern bourgeois society that has sprouted from the ruins of feudal society has not done away with class antagonisms but has established new classes, new conditions of oppression, new forms of struggle in place of the ones.

Our epoch, the epoch of the bourgeoisie, possesses, however, this distinctive feature: it has simplified the class antagonisms. Society as a whole is more and more splitting up into two great classes directly facing each other: Bourgeoisie and

# The first scientific communist

ONE HUNDRED YEARS ago on March 14th 1883, Karl Marx died. This greatest of all communists devoted his entire life to the emancipation of the working class. All of his studies, his struggles and his sacrifices were devoted to that end.

The scientific analysis and programme that he developed has armed and equipped countless millions in the battles of the class war. It will continue to do so until exploitation and oppression are finished forever. But few are celebrating this anniversary in a manner befitting this great revolutionary.

The ruling Stalinist bureaucracies of Eastern Europe and China will celebrate Marx's anniversary reluctantly and furtively. They have to conceal the emancipatory programme of Karl Marx from the masses that they oppress in the name of 'constructing communism' The trade union leaders, labourites and Social Democrats will, at best, damn Marx as a great but out-dated thinker. They will trip over themselves to reassure the bourgeoisie that Marx is no inspiration to them and, particularly in Britain, outdo each other in protests that they have never read Marx or, as good Anglo-Saxon philistines, could never understand him. Yet the first leaders of the British TUC worked in close alliance with Marx in the International Working Men's Association. When bourgeois economists, utopian socialists, popes and prelates codemned unions as impossible, undesirable and sinful Marx defended their present and future role as the bedrock organisations of the working class.

It was Marx who first proclaimed the need for mass political parties of the working class, and his followers that pioneered the foundations of those parties. The first generation leaders of these parties Bebel and Liebknecht, Hyndman and Morris, De Leon, Plekhanov, Guesde and Labriola were all Marxists.

Yet today's leaders of these parties and unions will at best praise Marx for what he was not and at worst use the opportunity of the centenary to clear their credentials with their ruling class masters.

Benn, the darling of the left, tries to combine both. This sentimental worshiper of Jesus and the divine right of Parliament never misses an opportunity to stress that he is not a Marxist. This does not prevent some self-styled Marxists eagerly claiming to be Bennites "Truly - the old man would have said - I sowed dragons but reaped fleas". Benn's praise of Marx is of a piece with his praise of Jesus. He likens Marxism to a religion. In Benn's words he has moved "people all over the world to social action" and is thus "ranked with the founders of the world's greatest faiths." He has given hope and courage to face persecution. Benn cannot understand that it is exploitation and oppression that drives men and women to revolt, that it is class solidarity and organisation that give them courage and will but that Marxism gives them a clear goal, a strategy and tactics to win - to defeat and crush the oppressors. Thus it has nothing in common with the 'gentle-Jesus-meek-and-mild' turn the other cheek, school of English so-called socialism.

The ruling class has a better measure of the meaning of Marxism. Institute of Directors chief Walter Goldsmith has declared class war on Marxism in celebration of the anniversary of Marx's death. So too has reactionary Sunday Telegraph editor Peregrine Worsthorne who has announced, "Without Marx, I might even have been a liberal. As it is, I am a Tory Marxist, in the sense of accepting the need to take sides in the class war, even if, so to speak, on the other side."

In the face of Thatcher and Reagan the official representatives of the workers and oppressed cower and retreat. In stagnant late capitalism we are witnessing the rebirth of the old utopias and blind

alleys that Marx fought against. The old dreams that had temporarily co-existed with early capitalism rise from the grave in the period of its senility.

Capitalism's crisis drives the petty-bourgeoisie into a whole series of feminist, ecologist and pacifist utopian projects; Zero growth economies, nuclear free zones, life-style politics. Marx taught us to reject all hole-in-the-corner schemes - all panaceas that have to be carried out behind the back of society and its class struggle.

For us the only alternative to crisis and war lies in winning the working class through its actual struggles to the communist programme of a workers state and a planned economy organised to meet human need. In the face of the prevalent pessimism and retreat we insist that the programme of revolutionary communism constitutes the only hope for mankind. The alternative will be war and decay.

The twentieth century has twice shown capitalism's capacity for global barbarism. The progressive role of capitalism has long been played out. To honour Karl Marx, the first scientist of the proletariat, the first scientific communist, we can do no better than recall the words and message of Wilhelm Liebknecht's speech at Marx's graveside. Liebknecht, the leader of revolutionary social democracy in Germany, paid a fitting tribute to his friend and co-fighter for human liberation. It is the revolutionary tradition of Marx and Liebknecht, not the anodyne remembrances of Andropov and Benn, that we in Workers Power will pay tribute to on March 14th.

"It would not be right for me to give a beautiful speech here. No one was more an enemy of the phrase than Karl Marx. His great service was precisely that he freed the proletariat, the party of the working people, from the phrase and gave it the unshakeable basis of science. A revolutionary in scientific thought and scholarship, as well as a revolutionary in scientific method, he reached the highest peak of scholarship, then descended to make science the common property of the people.

Science is the liberator of the people. Natural science liberates us from God. Still the God in heaven lives on, even if science has killed him.

Social science, which Marx opened up for the people, kills capitalism and with it the idols and masters of the earth, which as long as they live, will not let God die.

Science is not German. It knows no limits, especially no limits of nationality. And so the creator of *Capital* must naturally become the creator of the International Workingmen's Association.

This scientific basis, for which we thank Marx, enables us to repel all the attacks of the foe and to continue the struggle we have begun with ever-increasing strength.

Marx transformed Social Democracy from a sect and from a school to a party, into a party which now fights on undefeated, and which will be victorious.

This is true not only for us Germans. Marx belonged to the proletariat. He devoted his whole life to the proletariat of all countries. The thinking proletariat in all nations owe him thankful respect.

Marx's death strikes us as a heavy blow. But we do not mourn. He is not dead. He lives in the hearts and the minds of the proletariat. His memory will not disappear, his teaching will affect growing numbers of circles.

Instead of mourning, we will act in his great spirit; with all our strength, we will work for the earliest possible realisation of what he taught and fought for. Thus we can best celebrate his memory.

Deceased, living friend! We will follow the way you have shown us to victory. That we promise you at your grave!"

# T OF THE ROGRAMME

Proletariat." And the Communist Manifesto contains a masterly appraisal of the contradictory character of the dawn of the epoch of bourgeois society. Capitalism had played a profoundly revolutionary role in all spheres of human activity. It had revolutionised mankind's productive potential. It had broken down insularity and national isolation. "The cheap price of its commodities are the heavy artillery with which it batters down all Chinese walls, with which it forces the barbarians' intensely obstinate hatred of foreigners to capitulate." The rule of the bourgeoisie drew millions into the cities. "It has created enormous cities, has greatly increased the urban population as compared with the rural, and has thus rescued a considerable part of the population from the idiocy of rural life," and trampled underfoot the superstitions and myths that welded feudal Europe together. "It has drowned the most heavenly ecstasies of religion's fervour, of chivalrous enthusiasm, of philistine sentimentalism, in the icy water of egotistical calculation." Nowhere else in the literature of the world can we find such a powerful summary of capitalism in its revolutionary phase.

Similarly the Manifesto contains an incisive account of the proletariat class as it enters on to the stage of history. Only gradually does the proletariat cease to restore by force the vanished status of the workman of the Middle Ages. "Only gradually does it succeed in overcoming the divisions in its ranks and standing as a unified class against the bourgeoisie. It is in battle with the bourgeoisie that the fruit of the ever expanding union of the workers develops and matures. It is that concentrated and united proletariat that must overthrow the capitalist class, must become capitalism's gravedigger, if it is to free itself from exploitation and oppression.

Having introduced the Marxist analysis of the developing epoch the Manifesto proceeds to advance a programme for the working class. That programme can only be fully understood if we recognise the particular perspective that the Manifesto's authors shared at the time. Marx and Engels were convinced that Germany was on the eve of its own bourgeois revolution which would have its own specific characteristics. Most importantly Marx and Engels presumed that the relative strength of the proletariat in Germany and its inevitable self-organisation during the coming German revolution meant that the proletarian revolution would very quickly follow the bourgeois revolution in Germany.

While they believed that the Chartist movement in Britain also heralded the impending overthrow of capitalism in its very birthplace, for both of them, Germany held the key to the international revolution. In the concluding section of the Manifesto they wrote: "The Communists turn their attention chiefly to Germany, because that country is on the eve of a bourgeois revolution that is bound to be carried out under more advanced conditions of European civilisation, and with a much more developed proletariat, than that of England was in the seventeenth, and of France in the eighteenth century, and because the bourgeois revolution in Germany will be the prelude to an immediately following proletarian revolution."

## ARMING THE PROLETARIAT

This perspective meant that the Manifesto, as well as popularising the programme of communism and outlining measures necessary for the transition to communism, had to programmatically arm the proletariat for the impending bourgeois revolution. A programme of transition from the bourgeois to the proletarian revolution was a crucial component of the Manifesto. Part Two of the Communist Manifesto, which is followed by a sharp polemic against all other existing schools of socialism, contains all these elements. It is announced that "The communists do not form a separate party opposed to other working-class parties" - a fact that is fully understood only if we read on to see that "The immediate aim of the communists is the same as that of all the other proletarian parties: formation of the proletariat into a class, overthrow of the bourgeois supremacy, conquest of political power by the proletariat". The manifesto predates the formation of reformist parties. The communists of 1848 are declared to be distinct from other strands in the workers movement in their internationalism and their ability to fight all struggles as part of the struggle of the proletariat as a whole.

No attempt is made to disguise the communist programme. "the theory of the communist may be summed up in the single sentence: abolition of private property."

The Manifesto itself concludes with a sharp reminder that the communists make no effort to ever conceal their views from the proletariat. "The Communists disdain to conceal their views and aims. They openly declare that their ends can be attained only by the forcible overthrow of all existing social contradictions. Let the ruling classes tremble at a communist revolution. The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win. WORKING MEN OF ALL COUNTRIES, UNITE!"

The programme of communism is starkly counterposed to the hollow claims of the capitalists' to represent culture and civilisation.

"In one word, you reproach us with intending to do away with your property. Precisely so; that is just what we intend.

From the moment when labour can no longer be converted into capital, money, or rent, into a social power capable of being monopolised, i.e. from the moment when individual property can no longer be transformed into bourgeois property, into capital, from that moment, you say, individuality vanishes.

You must, therefore, confess that by 'individual' you mean no other person than the bourgeois, than the middle-class owner of property. This person must indeed be swept out of the way, and made impossible.

Communism deprives no man of the power to appropriate the products of society, all that it does is to deprive him of the power to subjugate the labour of others by means of such appropriation," and again "The Communists are further reproached with desiring to abolish countries and nationality.

The working men have no country. We cannot take from them what they have not got." But the Communist Manifesto is more than an abstract presentation of the Communist programme. It contains a programme of ten demands under the banner of which the proletariat would commence the transition to socialism. Marx and Engels were to reassess these demands later in their life. They are meant to be the means whereby the proletariat, having won "the battle of democracy" would proceed to centralise production in its own hands, abolish private property and raise its own cultural level. Hence the programme includes abolition of private property in land, transport banking. It calls for the abolition of the rights of inheritance, the extension of state owned factories, equal liability of all to labour and the extension of public education to all.

## A TRANSITIONAL ACTION PROGRAMME

These should not be understood to be a package of reform which bourgeois can pick and choose between. It is explicitly advanced as a programme of transition to socialist production, not as the 'minimum' programme of the Communist League. The Manifesto makes it perfectly clear that the objective of the authors is a communist society and that the ten point programme should be understood and judged as a means to that end. It stands as a transitional action programme for the proletarian revolution which was expected to follow fast on the heels of the bourgeois revolution.

Writing twenty-four years later in the Preface to the 1872 German edition, Marx and Engels were to re-assess their transition programme. It was alien to their method for any programme to have been rendered into fixed tablets of stone. Practical experience of the class struggle and the giant advances made by 'modern industry' had rendered the programme "antiquated" in some details. Most vitally the experience of the Paris Commune had provided them with incontrovertible evidence that "the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery, and wield it for its own purposes". But such reservations should not hide the intention of the authors to present a programme for proletarian revolution.

The perspective of the Communist Manifesto was immediately vindicated even though the outcome was not a successful proletarian revolution. Riots spread through the major Italian cities in January 1848. On February 22nd in France a popular insurrection overthrew the conservative government of Guizot and forced the abdication of Louis Philippe on February 24th. A bourgeois government was forced to grant concessions to the organised proletariat in the form of National Workshops and the Luxemburg Commission of enquiry into workers' grievances. Vienna rose against the hated Metternich on 13th March and barricade fighting in the working class districts of Berlin forced the Prussian monarchy to sanction the election of a constituent assembly. In May, a pre-parliament primarily composed of representatives of the bourgeoisie met in Frankfurt and declared its commitment to the establishment of a unified federal and constitutional Germany. The representatives of the German bourgeoisie however declared their intention of achieving their aims without violence and through negotiation with the German speaking monarchies in Berlin and Vienna. All of the key elements envisaged by the Manifesto - the preliminary hesitant mobilisation of bourgeois opposition to feudalism and the self-organisation of the proletariat - existed side by side in the early months of 1848.

The Manifesto had stated of the Communists that, "In Germany they fight with the bourgeoisie whenever it acts in a revolutionary way, against the absolute monarch, the feudal squirearchy, and the petty bourgeoisie." But it also expressed the view that the bourgeois revolution would prove but a prelude to the proletarian revolution. In the first



Marx

instance the emphasis of Marx and Engels was to force the bourgeoisie to push ahead with its own revolution. If we look at the Demands of the Communist Party in Germany written in March 1848 (see Collected works Vol.7) and distributed in leaflet and newspaper article form it outlines seventeen demands aimed at securing a democratic unified republic based on the universal arming of the people. Feudal obligations and the right of inheritance are to be destroyed, national workshops and a state banking and transport system are to be introduced. This action programme for a bloc of proletarians, peasants, and the petty bourgeoisie is clearly aimed at forcing the German revolution through to the point that a proletarian revolution is on the agenda.

This perspective guided Marx and Engels during the initial stage of the 1848 revolution in Germany. They returned to Germany in April and in June announced publication of a paper with the support of Rhineland democrats in Cologne. The paper, Neue Rheinische Zeitung, declared itself to be 'an organ of Democracy' and during these months Marx and Engels did no work with the Communist League. As they were later to admit they allowed the Communist League to stagnate and decay. The Communist League in Cologne was dominated by supporters of Andreas Gottschalk whose Workers Societies concerned itself only with working class and economic issues and abstained from the democratic battles that were convulsing Germany and the whole of the European continent. Marx concentrated his efforts on producing Neue Rheinische Zeitung while sending his close supporter Moll into Gottschalk's Society with instructions to win the best elements away from its leadership.

Neue Rheinische Zeitung campaigned in support of the revolution throughout Europe and for a revolutionary war against the last bastion of European reaction - Tsarist Russia. Beyond this its programme was focused on the completion of the bourgeois revolution. Engels summarised its programme in later years "The political programme of the Neue Rheinische Zeitung consisted of two main points a single, indivisible, democratic German republic, and war with Russia, which included the restoration of Poland." It urged the bourgeoisie to press forward with its revolution as a means of preparing the ground for the expected proletarian revolution.

Marx's launch of Neue Rheinische Zeitung took place before the momentous class struggle of the June days in Paris. Having consolidated their political power the French bourgeoisie turned on the proletarians whose insurrection had brought them to power in February. On 21st June the National Workshops were formally abolished. Paris was engulfed in street fighting until 25th June when Cavaignac succeeded in bloody crushing the workers' revolt and taking eleven thousand prisoners.

Neue Rheinische Zeitung supported the workers of Paris. Marx was later to talk of the June days as living proof that the proletariat and bourgeoisie could not live indefinitely in the much hallowed harmony of a social and democratic republic. It proved the fundamental conflict of interest that existed between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. It was precisely this conflict of interest that served to pull the bourgeoisie of Germany back from the brink of settling their own accounts with feudalism. Fear of the potential of a proletarian uprising dissuaded the liberal bourgeoisie from mounting a decisive challenge to the Prussian and Austrian monarchies. In its own way this confirmed the very real potential of proletarian revolution on which the perspective of the Communist Manifesto was based.

The summer and autumn of 1848 produced mounting evidence of the spinelessness of the German bourgeoisie. The Frankfurt Assembly possessed no armed force of its own. When the Prussian monarchy staged a military conflict with Denmark - ostensibly in support of the Germans in Schleswig-Holstein but in reality as a means of preventing Schleswig-Holstein becoming a focus of revolution - it had no power to oppose the act itself. Nor could it oppose the armistice that the Prussian monarch signed, which failed to secure the freedom

of Schleswig-Holstein from Denmark. When barricades were erected in Cologne and Frankfurt in popular protest at the armistice the Frankfurt Assembly had to look to Prussian troops to defend them. The bourgeoisie was effectively powerless both in the face of feudal reaction and the threat of popular insurrection. By November 1848 the Prussian monarchy dissolved the Constituent Assembly in Berlin. In the same month Prussian troops mercilessly crushed an insurrection in Cologne. By April 1849 the Prussian King was confident enough to turn on the hapless Frankfurt Assembly which was pathetically offering him the crown of a constitutional little Germany which excluded Austria. While fighting continued in Dresden, the Rhineland and Baden (Engels fought in the Baden army against Prussia) the bourgeois revolution had effectively been crushed in Germany.

Marx reassessed his perspectives in the light of, and in the process of, these developments. By July 1848 his followers, Moll and Schapper, had succeeded in reorganising the Workers Society and commencing work amongst the peasantry. In Neue Rheinische Zeitung in July Marx was calling for a revolutionary government based on a popular insurrection which was to contain "heterogeneous elements" and not be exclusively bourgeois. The more the bourgeoisie retreated in the face of popular insurrection the more Marx laid stress on the need to form a popular militia and committees of public safety to push the revolution forward. In December 1848 Marx published a series of articles "The Bourgeoisie and the Counter Revolution" in which he analysed the bankruptcy of German liberalism and its inability to make its own revolution: "It did not trust its own slogans, used phrases instead of ideas, it was intimidated by the world storm and exploited it for its own ends; it displayed no energy in any respect, but resorted to plagiarism in every respect, it was vulgar because unoriginal, and original in its vulgarity; haggling over its own desires, without initiative, without faith in itself, without faith in the people, without a world-historic mission, an abominable dotard finding himself condemned to lead and to mislead the first youthful impulses of a virile people so as to make them serve his own senile interests - sans eyes, sans ears, sans teeth, sans everything - such was the Prussian bourgeoisie which found itself at the helm of the Prussian state after the March revolution."

In the aftermath of 1848, once again back in exile in Britain Marx and Engels were forced to reassess their perspective and programme for the proletariat in the bourgeois revolution. The major programmatic conclusions are to be found in the March 1850 address of the Central Committee of the Communist League. The address contains implicit criticisms of their own neglect of the Communist League itself. More importantly however Marx concluded that given the nature of the German bourgeoisie the tasks of destroying feudalism necessarily now fell to the popular classes and would be part of the early work of the proletarian revolution itself. The treacherous role of the German liberal bourgeoisie will be played out next time round by the democratic petty bourgeoisie. "The relationship of the revolutionary workers party to the petty bourgeoisie is this: it cooperates with them against the party which they aim to overthrow; it opposes them whenever they wish to secure their own position." While the petty bourgeois democrats will want to bring the revolution to an end as soon as possible the proletariat will have other interests. "It is our interest and our task to make the revolution permanent until all the more or less propertied classes have been driven from their ruling positions, until the proletariat has conquered state power and until the association of the proletarians has progressed sufficiently far - not only in one country but in all the leading countries of the world - that competition between the proletarians of these countries ceases and at least the decisive forces of production are concentrated in the hands of the workers."

Expecting the lull after 1848 to be a short one Marx and Engels had here succeeded in developing and re-elaborating the programme of the Communist Manifesto for a new period of struggle. No longer is their programme one for speedy transition from bourgeois to proletarian revolution. It is for a proletarian revolution which takes on as its own the task of destroying feudalism on the road to consolidating proletarian state power. This is the meaning of the address' call for the proletarians of Germany to realise that "Their battle cry must be: The Permanent Revolution."

In 1872 Marx and Engels decided not to edit or alter the Communist Manifesto despite its ambiguities and shortcomings. This was not because of reverence or complacency on their part. It was because "the Manifesto has become a historical document which we have no longer any right to alter." Out of the experience of 1848, the expansion of capitalism and the Paris Commune Marx and Engels proceeded to develop both the Communist analysis of capitalism and the class struggle and the programme for proletarian revolution. For revolutionary Marxists today the Communist Manifesto stands as a compendium of the method of the communist programme which focuses those principles to a given period of class struggle in order to outline a programme for proletarian revolution.

The spectre of Communism continues to haunt the globe. Every day that passes shows all the more clearly that, should the proletariat fail to destroy capitalism then capitalism itself threatens to bring about "the common ruin of the contending classes" through its destructive drive to war. Let the anniversary of Karl Marx's death, be a celebration of his revolutionary ideas. Let it spur us to fight with renewed vigour and determination for "the revolutionary re-constitution of society at large".

by Dave Hughes

IN THE LAST issue of Workers Power (No. 39), we traced the factional struggle within the British Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP) over entry into the Labour Party. On the one side, the majority around Jock Haston argued against total entry and for fraction work subordinated to "independent" RCP work around industrial struggles. Ranged against them were the combined forces of the RCP minority - led by Gerry Healy - and the International Secretariat leadership of Mandel and Pablo, who from 1945 onwards argued ever more stridently for total entry and the liquidation of any open party.

Despite their vastly more concrete grasp of conditions within the Labour Party and within the unions, the RCP majority had at least one fatal flaw, one that they shared with the Healy/IS opposition. It was this flaw that was to lead by 1949 to the destruction of the RCP and the disappearance of any public organ of "Trotskyism" for over eight years.

As we have demonstrated Healy and Pablo whilst having no grasp of Trotsky's critical analytical method, clung all the more rigidly to his political perspectives of the late 1930s. These envisaged enormous revolutionary upheavals as a result of the war; the death knell of Stalinism and social democracy and the transformation of the FI sections into mass parties. Disorientated by the falsification of these perspectives, yet deeply fearful of admitting this, the whole FI resorted increasingly to vulgar apologetics designed to preserve at all costs a perspective of revolution and a mass FI just around the corner. When the revolution failed to materialise and the Trotskyist groups stagnated and even declined, the FI leaders looked increasingly to false "perspectives" (catastrophic crisis, a third world war, etc) and to "new" tactics and new forces that would carry out the revolution.

Healy re-discovered Trotsky's advice to the British Trotskyists of the 1930s regarding the desirability of entry into the Labour Party and ripped it out of context. The "inevitable" crisis and slump of British imperialism would galvanise and radicalise the British proletariat. The masses would "inevitably" express this radicalisation through the Labour Party. The task of Trotskyists was to "anticipate" this development, to capture leading positions in the Labour Party prior to this occurrence, and put the organisational loyalty of the working class to the Labour Party to good purpose by revealing one's "Trotskyism" at the right moment so as to direct the energy of the proletariat against capitalism itself.

Healy's catastrophism provided an apparently revolutionary cover for his opportunism. In 1945/1946 he insisted on cloaking his calls for dissolution of the RCP into the ILP with analogies drawn from the 1930s. He could joyfully quote Trotsky's advice in 1933 that: "If we only send part of our membership into the ILP and keep a public organ going outside of it then we are in danger of getting our members expelled from the ILP in a very short time."

Healy could use the 1945 ILP expulsions of RCP members in Newcastle as evidence of the truth of this. But Healy ignored the fact that Trotsky had based this tactical advice on the existence of a revolutionary majority in the "left centrist" ILP of 1933-5. This in his view justified total entry. Moreover, Trotsky demanded no restrictions on political discussion. But by 1945 the ILP had become what Trotsky knew it would if it was not won to the programme of the FI, i.e. "a formed, homogenous party with a stable apparatus." In which case Trotsky argued that "entry into it would not only be useless but fatal."

Trotsky drew this conclusion as early as 1936. Healy not only wanted to apply this method in 1945 but to transfer its application in 1946 to the Labour Party itself with its entrenched parliamentary and trade union bureaucracy.

# BEVAN'S TROTSKYIST CHEERLEADERS

Both factions in the RCP held to perspectives based on a rapid numerical growth of the party. The Haston-Grant majority saw the source of that in trade union work. The Healy minority saw its realisation as coming through the Labour Party. Both sides seriously mis-estimated the nature and tempo of the class struggles that were to produce increased recruitment. After the war RCP membership dropped each year, while no revolutionary struggles erupted. Indeed the onset of the Cold War and the witch hunting initiated by the Labour and Trade Union bureaucrats created, if anything, a democratic counter-revolutionary situation. The post-war series of state-capitalist nationalisations and social-welfare reforms ground to a halt. Working class resistance was limited to isolated union struggles against wage limits but the TUC-Labour Party bloc held firm against rank and file pressure. Full employment and social reforms proved a powerful base from which Bevin, Attlee and Morrison could isolate their Stalinist and Trotskyist opponents.

The Trotskyists undertook virtually no thorough-going perspectival and programmatic re-assessment other than the analysis of Eastern Europe. Other debates centered on tactical questions premised on a false understanding of the period that post-war Trotskyism confronted.

Healy's opportunistic appetite with regard to the Labour Party stemmed from his impatience. His schematism, and denigration of propaganda tasks were evident as early as December 1945: "The high hopes entertained at the time of the conference in the future of open work, the glowing future for the independent Party depicted by so many speakers have not so far been realised, nor is there any significant pointer in this direction. The rate of growth of the RCP since the conference (only 4 months previously - WP) can do nothing but demonstrate the impotence of a small propaganda body to affect the vital course of the political struggle."

The tempo of events, rapid on a world scale, in this country still lags behind Europe and Asia, but this cannot last long...The already overburdened economy of Britain will collapse catastrophically and the Labour Party will be thrown into utter confusion."

## AN OPPORTUNIST OUTLOOK

This outlook was in no sense based on the objective conditions of the time which had unavoidably marginalised the revolutionary communists. Formally it may appear similar to the revolutionary optimism of the Transitional Programme, but the period was completely changed by the very outcome of the war, the strengthening of Stalinism and social democracy. It was not the hall-mark of Trotsky to be forever predicting breakthroughs of the G Healy type. On the contrary, in October 1922 after the wave of revolutionary unrest in Europe had subsided Trotsky said of the British communists that they were "a successfully functional educational and propaganda society but not a party capable of directly leading the masses." And this was when the CPGB was ten times larger and more strategically implanted in the working class movement than the RCP!

The RCP majority, however, had no operative alternative to Healy's opportunism. The gradual

This article, in our continuing series on "Entryism", looks at the "Socialist Outlook" venture by Gerry Healy in the 1940s and 1950s. With the arrival of yet another "non-sectarian" paper for the Labour left - "Socialist Action" - it is timely to look at the error of a previous similar venture.

The "Trotskyists" of the IMG and, indeed, those of the WSL, whose supporters produced yet another "broad" paper "Socialist Organiser", would do well to look at the history of "Socialist Outlook". That history, as we show, was one of political liquidation as the price of building a strategic alliance with friendly left-reformists. At the moment "Socialist Organiser" and most probably "Socialist Action" seem hell-bent on treading a similar path.

foundering of their hopes for mass growth through the unions, appeared to confirm Healy's perspective as the correct one. By 1949 they were a spent force. The RCP's open paper "Socialist Appeal" disappeared and a clear field was left for Healy's centrist "Socialist Outlook" venture.

"Socialist Outlook" was launched in December 1948 as a 4-page monthly. Whilst still pursuing his faction fight against Haston and Grant, Healy insisted in self-protection that total entry into the Labour Party would nevertheless be to fight for the programme of the FI. But once the exigencies of factional in-fighting were over this pretence was rapidly dropped. "Socialist Outlook" described itself as "The Paper of Labour's Left-Wing". It was not a Trotskyist organ. Nor, within Healy's perspective could it be. Since a mass left-wing did not yet exist in the Labour Party, the role of the paper was to coax one into being. Such a current it was hoped would be a centrist one - at first. A centrist current therefore needed a centrist paper.

Healy convinced the Constructional Engineering Union (CEU) Secretary Jack Stanley to co-found the paper. Healy, Stanley, John Lawrence ("Club" member) and later Tom Braddock, formed the Editorial Board. Braddock was a Labour MP until he lost his seat in the 1950 General Election. After that the NEC refused to endorse his candidature any where else because of this leftism and he became even more closely involved in "Socialist Outlook". Various left Labour MPs contributed to SO, several with definite pro-Stalinist leanings who could not be accommodated in the pages of the "neutralist" "Tribune".

No debates of or features on the Fourth International were found in SO's pages. The politics of the paper reflected left-labourite concerns and the pro-Stalinist sympathies of people like Stanley and Braddock. This of course merged well with the pro-Stalinism of the Pablo FI after 1948. A year after the launch of SO, Ellis Smith MP and a core of SO writers took the initiative in launching the "Socialist Fellowship" (SF). SO was not the official paper of the SF, nor did Healy control it as he did in fact control the paper, but the Fellowship drew in "broader" forces. One hundred delegates from 29 towns attended the first conference and by mid-1950 it claimed 1,000 members. At the peak of its influence in early 1951 SO claimed to be selling 9-10,000 copies a month though Mark Jenkins' book "Bevanism" asserts that it was probably nearer 5,000.

## HOPE THE LEFTS FIGHT

While SO itself had no programme the Fellowship advocated a left-reformist platform. The "Trotskyists" succeeded in getting a call for a sliding scale of wages and benefits into the platform. However this hint of "Trotskyism" had no real revolutionary content. It was divorced from workers' control demands, and in a period of low inflation was little more than a cosmetic reform which even Bevan managed to support in relation to benefits. SO itself did little to add any demands for workers' control, either in connection with the sliding scale, or the government's nationalisations. It went as far as calling for "more industrial democracy in our schemes of nationalisation." (January 1949) but diplomatic evasiveness shrouded every slogan put forward.

In the SO Editorial of August 1949 on the "Way Out of the Economic Crisis", in place of the clear demands for a sliding scale of wages operated by the working class we are told: "Wages can be improved...if the government is prepared to attack the wealth and privileges of the capitalists." The question of workers' control over industry is posed thus: "The basic industries of the country must be operated as part of a national plan. The workers themselves, with the aid of technicians and Government representatives, can operate these industries...." This concession, which effectively amounts to workers' participation, was a classic centrist amalgam of Trotskyism and left reformism. It played straight into the hands of the left-reformists who were arguing then, as Bevan was to argue after the 1951 election defeat, that it was "a constitutional outrage" to "entrust these (nationalised) industries to Boards...of Civil Servants, leaving only a power of general direction to the Ministers." (In Place of Fear, 1952, pp.97-8).

It was 'government representatives' that the left-reformists wanted, not workers' control. It was understandable that Bevan should identify governmental or ministerial control with socialism, but for Trotskyists - "government representatives" whether Labour or Tory should have been stigmatised as agents of the bosses.

SO repeatedly engaged in illusion-mongering about the achievements of the Labour Government and the prospects of socialism through the Labour Party and Parliament. Indeed workers' illusions in the Labour Government as a workers' government introducing socialism were consciously bolstered. Thus, the Editorial of May 1949 trumpeted: "Labour Believes in Socialism". "In Britain we have taken a great step forward towards socialism by defeating the Tories and establishing for the first time in our history a majority Labour Government." And this was after nearly four years of Labour rule on behalf of the capitalists! In an April 51 Editorial, it was claimed that the Labour Government was "itself engaged in freeing Britain from the exactions of the capitalist class..." In the Editorial of January 1950 the Labour Government was urged "to abolish capitalist exploitation and replace it with planned socialist co-operation..." and in the October 1951 Election supplement, workers were urged to vote Labour: "as an expression of your confidence in the workers' ability to govern this country...and to act so that the Labour Government will destroy capitalism."



Bevan on his way to his first cabinet meeting

Bit by bit the Trotskyist programme was trimmed to fit the rhetoric of the lefts. Every constitutional, parliamentary illusion was nourished in the pages of SO. The notion of direct independent working class action as alone capable of erecting a workers' state on the ruins of the bourgeois state found no place in SO's columns. In its place its readers were treated to the musings of Mr. H. Davies' MP's "Week in Westminster" or Tom Braddock's socialist romanticism.

Industrial disputes were given extensive coverage by Socialist Outlook. The resistance to the austerity programme of the Labour Government was supported. However the goal of the resistance was declared to be a replacement of the leadership of the Labour Party with a "left" one. This was seen as the answer to the conflict. Every radical phrase, every loose leftist remark, or sign of discontent in the PLP was seized upon as proof of the possibility that the lefts in the LP would fight the right for leadership.

It came as no surprise that the "deep entry" perspective undermined the belief of these "Trotskyists" in the need for even a hint of political independence from Labourism. The whole logic of



the perspective and practice leads in the direction of total liquidation. Indeed, SO was a conveyor belt for many out of revolutionary politics. One leader of the RCP, who fought Healy's early opportunism but later succumbed, was Jock Haston. His resignation letter eloquently summed up the logic of Healy's liquidationist project: "Publically in the paper it is argued, not by right or left-wing Labour Party members, but by Trotskyists, that the Labour Party is a socialist party, the mass party of the working class to which all workers must loyally adhere; and that this party can transform society through Parliament. But privately within the confines of the group, the opposite is advocated. Allegedly on the basis of Marxist theory, it is categorically denied that it is possible to transform this party into an instrument for the overthrow of capitalism, and that parliament can be used as the vehicle for such a transformation. The line in the paper ...is either 'a capitulation before the pressure of bourgeois-democratic public opinion' or a tacit admission that this aspect of 'fundamentals' is not applicable."

Haston and others were to conclude it was the latter. Those that remained could sustain their centrism only by reducing Trotskyism to a private faith based on a mixture of economic catastrophism and political 'processism' which would guarantee eventual success.

"Socialist Outlook" was marked by a passive acceptance of the classic reformist divide between trade union and political struggle and could only think of making trade union struggles "political" by subordinating them to Labour Party routinism. Thus articles in SO could declare: "It is not possible for a militant trade unionist to struggle politically unless he does it through the Labour Party." (SO no.56, P. Williams.)

Despite the fact that shop stewards and leading militants wrote for the paper, no Trotskyist critique of the trade union bureaucracy was advanced. Extreme right-wingers, like Arthur Deakin of the TGWU, were denounced but the political limitations of the trade union bureaucracy as a distinct social caste was never pointed to or warned against. In practical struggles the steps necessary to achieve rank and file political independence were never advanced. The fact was that Healy was compromised by his alliance with "left" bureaucrats like Stanley within SO. The alliance was on Stanley's terms.

#### ESTABLISHING FRIENDLY CONNECTIONS

The limitations this imposed were again highlighted when Labour was in opposition after 1951. The "lefts" as usual indulged in more radical phrases now they were free from the responsibility of office. Conference became the scene of sharp left/right tussles. The Labour Party right-wing relied upon the trade union block vote to stymie constituency party aspirations. What was needed was a campaign for democratising the unions and seizing the block vote from the likes of Deakin and placing it in the hands of the political levy-paying rank and file trade unionists. The Healyite editorial control of SO could not, however, risk making this call and embarrassing the trade union bureaucrats upon whom SO relied. All that was proposed was for the left in the PLP and constituencies to win over left bureaucrats to wield the block vote for progressive policies: "If the Left Wing in the Unions now allies itself to the Left Wing in the Party and the Co-ops, the 'block vote' which has carried so many right wing motions in the past CAN NOW BE WIELDED FOR SOCIALISM". (SO, No.41 May 1952.)

This proposal, like everything else in SO, was utopian. It relied upon the "revolutionary" qualities of the left-wing of reformism. After Labour's defeat in 1951, the illusions placed in the lefts in the PLP and the unions mounted and served to underline the distance that Healy and the "Club" had travelled from Trotskyism. This accommodating view of the Labour "lefts" did not, of course, develop with Labour's defeat but had been a theme of Healy's from the early days of the faction. Perhaps the sharpest statement is found in the re-unification statement of the factions in March 1949; "Certain lefts have developed some prestige as a result of their criticisms of the right wing leadership's policy on one or other aspect. As problems become more intense, these lefts will be more bold and outspoken as a reflection of working class pressure. Workers in the unions and the LP will gravitate towards these individuals in search of a solution to their problems .....As LP members we will be able to establish friendly connections and through them with the trends around them." (our emphasis).

In this every last element of Trotsky's warnings on the role of the "lefts" is turned upside down. Trotsky warned that the "lefts" will ultimately deceive and seek to reconcile the workers with the Party leadership and through it to the state. They not only reflect the pressure of the workers but they seek to divert it into harmless voting bases for their own parliamentary ambitions.

This accommodation was a travesty of the united front and obstructed the development of a revolutionary wing in the Labour Party. Trotsky was crystal clear that conciliation to left leaders would result in a weakening of the revolutionary forces. His attitude towards Bevan's more radical predecessors - Purcell, Lansbury and Wheatley - demonstrates this: "The ideological and organisational formation of a really revolutionary party, on the basis of a mass movement, is only conceivable under conditions of a continuous, systematic, unwavering, untiring and naked denunciation of the muddles, the compromises, and indecisions of the quasi-left leaders of all stripes".

As Minister of Labour Bevan was finally responsible for the imprisonment of 10 gas workers for striking in 1950, and charging 7 dockers with organising an



Bevan

illegal strike in 1951. On a range of issues the other lefts had shown themselves to be of a similar ilk. Yet Healy refused to make any untiring and unwavering criticism of them. He dubbed the Bevanites "centrists", and maintained friendly relations with them. His approach to the lefts was that of a Stalin or a Bukharin rather than a Trotsky. It was an infallible sign of his centrism.

Labour lost the October 1951 General Election despite registering their highest ever vote. As usual the lefts in the PLP took the advantage of a period in opposition to campaign for "left" policies. More often than not the friction which results within the Labour Party is not wholly bad from the standpoint of the reformist bureaucracy. Even if the policy changes are resisted by the right, the advance of the left does have the effect of restoring worn credibility during the period of office. This was no less true of "Bevanism" than it was of Cripps' "Socialist League" in the 1930 wilderness, or of Benn after 1970 and 1979. Experience shows, however, that in each case, the "Trotskyist" centrists are a key component in strengthening rather than testing the illusions that these left reformists generate. Healy's self-appointed role was to maintain "friendly relations" with Bevanite MPs and assist them to organise their supporters.

Bevan's credit in the working class movement rested above all on his construction of the National Health Service and his opposition to re-armament as part of the American cold war drive. It was the linking of these issues which was to lead to his resignation from the Cabinet in April 1951. When Gaitskill's 1951 budget pushed defence expenditure beyond 14% of GNP and involved clawing back £23 million from the NHS to help do it, Bevan resigned. This gesture was the start of the Bevanite movement. Organisationally, Bevanism was always extremely weak, its core being up to 50 or 60 Labour MPs. Bevan was loathe to organise the constituency rank and file and it was "Tribune" which in 1952 and 1953 organised the "Brains Trusts" meetings for these MPs. But these were no more than public meetings. There were no organised factions within the constituency parties. Bevanism was even weaker in the trade unions. Appealing over the heads of the trade union bureaucrats was out of the question for Bevan and Co. Nor was there at this time a discontented layer of trade union officials who could be related to, as with Benn after 1979. Certainly there was a powerful if beleaguered CP network but in Cold War circumstances Bevan and Co. were terrified of the red smear.

#### IN PLACE OF CRITICISM

Politically Bevan's oppositional stance was summed up in his book *In Place of Fear* (1952). The politics of this book were timid. His criticisms of parliamentary democracy were insignificant and lacked even the limited reforms advocated by today's Bennites. His proposals on nationalisation were much less radical than Cripps' of twenty years earlier. In summary Bevanism stood domestically for a "reasonable" level of defence spending, against NHS charges and for a moderate extension of nationalisation. On the foreign policy front Bevan was opposed to German re-armament and Britain's involvement in SEATO. Whilst in opposition the Bevanites exclusive arenas of "struggle" were the 1952-54 Labour Party Conferences and the House of Commons. In the various conferences Bevan's nationalisation proposals were soundly beaten by the block vote although 6 of the CLP NEC seats went to Bevanites each time.

His policies amounted to a "little England" revolt from becoming the subordinate partner of American imperialism during the Cold War. It was his stance on foreign policy, rather than his domestic policies, that brought down the wrath of the Labour right and the Tories. He threatened to reduce British imperialism to a fourth rate power. To them the loss of the Empire meant that a junior partnership with the US was the only realistic imperialist foreign policy that would preserve an influential role for Britain in the world.

The right wing counter-offensive to Bevan began in October 1952 when they voted to ban groups within the PLP. Bevan accepted immediately and the PLP group became "clandestine". The weakness of Bevanism was obvious here. Rather than campaign for their right to organise Bevan complied. "Socialist Outlook" calmly accepted Bevan's retreat. This was no surprise. The fake Trotskyist John Lawrence had praised the decision of the Socialist Fellowship not to fight when they were proscribed in early 1951 - a sacrifice to electoral credibility by Labour's NEC. Lawrence had opined: "They (the Socialist Fellowship - WP) have very wisely decided not to be driven out of the ranks of the Labour Party but to stay inside and fight it out." (SO, May 1951). Some fight, the first move of which is to dissolve your own army! Warning to the task of apologists for capitulation, the SF wrote to the NEC in September 1951: "As loyal members of the LP who have never had any interests separate and apart from the Labour Party we are obliged to accept the decisions of the NEC." Secret connoisseurs of Marxism will catch the allusion to the Communist Manifesto's "They (The Communists - WP) have no interests separate and apart from the proletariat as a whole." The sleight of hand whereby "proletariat" becomes Labour Party speaks volumes. These "Communists" certainly did not "disdain to conceal their aims." In true Walter Mitty fashion they consoled themselves with fantasies of power and success: "The SF may be gone but the ideas for which it fought will, we are sure, become the official policy of the movement in a shorter time than the witch-hunters imagine." (May 1951)

#### COVERING THE RETREAT

This covering up of the impotence and retreat of the left persists throughout the rest of "Socialist Outlook's" life. The political programme of the paper was reducible to "the return of a new and more socialist Labour Government" (No.41, 1952). The guarantee of its socialist character would be the victory of the left around Bevan, whose politics were equated with socialism. Despite the defeat of the left at the 1952 Morecambe Conference, "Socialist Outlook's" headline exploded: "BEVAN GIVES THE LEAD THE WORKERS WANT." The Editorial below blithely stated: "The first two days' proceedings at Morecambe have shown that the LP is turning resolutely to the socialist road....the delegates came to Morecambe looking for a clear alternative to the old politics. Aneurin Bevan gave them such a lead in his speech of the first day." (SO, No.51, Oct. 1952). The following month SO proclaimed (No.56): "Aneurin Bevan Demands a Real Socialist Policy." This ridiculous grovelling before such a timid left reformist programme and leader existed alongside fantasies about the growing successes in the fight against the right. In 1953 (No.69) SO detected "a gathering triumph of the vast majority of the rank and file of the Party over those few lordly leaders who would drag the movement behind the tail of the Tories...socialists in the Party are bound to triumph in the end." This was despite the steam-roller defeats at each Conference at the hands of Atlee, Gaitskill, Deakin and company, and despite the NEC's squelching of "Tribune's" Brains' Trust as "contrary to the spirit and intention of the recent decision of the PLP." Healy's schemas never have, and no doubt never will, brook interference from vulgar "appearances."

Through 1953-4 as Bevan's conciliationism became pronounced SO continued to laud him. The economic crisis, it was thought, would soon produce a mass radicalisation. This nonsense was expressed by Lawrence in an SO Editorial in 1953, at a time when the post-war boom was well underway: "Many of the points in Labour's programme are good in themselves, but their realisation is still envisaged as being achieved within the framework of a continuing prosperity of the western (capitalist) world. It is precisely this which makes the programme entirely inadequate and even Utopian in the present

world realities. As everyone now admits, the American recession, that is, slump, is now here!" (SO, Nov. 1953). Healy and Lawrence's predictions had acquired the scientific value of Old Moore's Almanac.

The end of the "Socialist Outlook" project came at the crossroads of two events; one within "the Club", one within the left-wing of the Labour Party.

The split in "the Club" between Healy and Lawrence in 1953 was a reflection of the long-term crisis within the Fourth International itself. Disoriented by the expansion of Stalinism the leadership of the FI, after the Tito-Stalin split, capitulated to Stalinism. In Britain this capitulation was modified to encompass the "left centrist" Bevan.

During the first two years of SO's life an even-handed conciliationism to Labourism and Stalinism had prevailed. It actually suited many of the lefts such as Braddock, many of whom were distinctly pro-Stalinist, especially "lefts" in international affairs. However, Britain's involvement in the Korean War changed things dramatically. The Labourites swung, by and large, behind the British Government. John Lawrence, the editor of SO, swung the paper towards an anti-war stance. This produced schisms within the SO periphery.

Prominent figures in the Socialist Fellowship, like Fenner Brockway and Ellis Smith, resigned. The Bevanites, long-time pacifists now showing their true social patriotic colours, began to distance themselves from Healy and his paper. Healy tolerated the pro-Stalinist line of the paper until, in 1953, Pablo proposed that the British, along with other sections, should enter ("entryism sui generis") the Stalinist parties. This proposal split the "Club" wide open. Lawrence acted as Pablo's agent while Healy with all his might resisted since his opportunist appetite could not be sated by work in the isolated rump of British Stalinism when Labourism was the mass force in the British working class.

The struggle within "the Club" didn't last very long with Healy winning a majority of the members - probably now less than 100, so "successful" had the SO tactic been. But there was a protracted fight for "Socialist Outlook", between Nov. 1953 and April 1954. This was not an ideological battle - the pages of SO hardly changed at all. But the battle over the control of the paper which Healy eventually won, was fierce, even leading to physical fights between Lawrence and Healy. By the time of Healy's 'victory' events within the LP and the Bevanite movement were signalling the end of the line for SO. The first two to three years of



SO were the most influential; its sales built up to a claimed 9,000 a month. By the time of the struggle for control of SO the paper was a weekly with a sale of around 4,500. The major change in its fortunes came with the defeat of the Labour Government in 1951. From then on the "neutralist" "Tribune", also a weekly by 1952, was outflanking SO in its flattery of Bevan as an "organiser" of the amorphous left. By 1954, devoid of any distinctive revolutionary politics to win readers away from Bevanism, "Socialist Outlook" was simply a second-rate "Tribune". The timing of SO's demise was dictated by the exigencies of Transport House's offensive against Bevan. SO was proscribed by the NEC by way of a warning shot across the bows of Bevan and his supporters.

Healy and his supporters meekly bowed their necks to the axe, if not with a glad heart, then at least with the sense of relief that the dwindling band of "Club" members remained Party members and that the "mass radicalisation" of the working class would still be able to crystallise around "Tribune." To be there when the masses arrived, Healy and Co. took the logical step of occasionally writing for and selling Michael Foot's "Tribune" for the next three years, pathetically underlining the "good bits" in copies to sell to working class readers!

Healy's successful liquidation of the only united and significant revolutionary Trotskyist grouping in the late '40s and early '50s was undoubtedly a tragedy. It was part of the international tragedy of the destruction of Trotsky's Fourth International by the generation of epigones Pablo, Mandel, Cannon, Hansen, Lambert etc. The repetition of this experience by Socialist Organiser and now Socialist Action, bids fair to repeat this history "the second time as farce." ■

by K. Hassell

# Ireland/Poland BANNING THE BULLET- BUT WHAT ABOUT THE TROOPS?

THE FEBRUARY 26th Labour movement conference on the use of plastic bullets in Northern Ireland was attended by over 300 people. Two thirds of those present were delegates from trade union and Labour Party bodies.

The conference was addressed by speakers who knew all too well the gruesome reality of the Army and police's use of plastic-bullets. Since they replaced rubber bullets in the mid-1970s, over 43 000 plastic bullets have been fired in Northern Ireland. So far a total of 14 people, seven of them children, have been killed by these supposedly non-lethal alternatives to lead bullets. The British army and RUC have been ever-ready to fire plastic bullets against anyone who dares come out on the streets in opposition to British imperialism's rule in Northern Ireland.

These bullets are part and parcel of the armoury that Britain uses to intimidate and terrorise the largely unarmed nationalist population in the North and the republican and socialist organisations who have taken up a justified armed struggle against the army.

What a sickening sight it is, therefore, to see the yellow press and its 'respectable' cohabiters in the gutters of Fleet Street, condemning the IRA for 'terrorism'. The same papers and the same politicians — Tory and Labour — who have joined in the chorus of attacks on Ken Livingstone for his

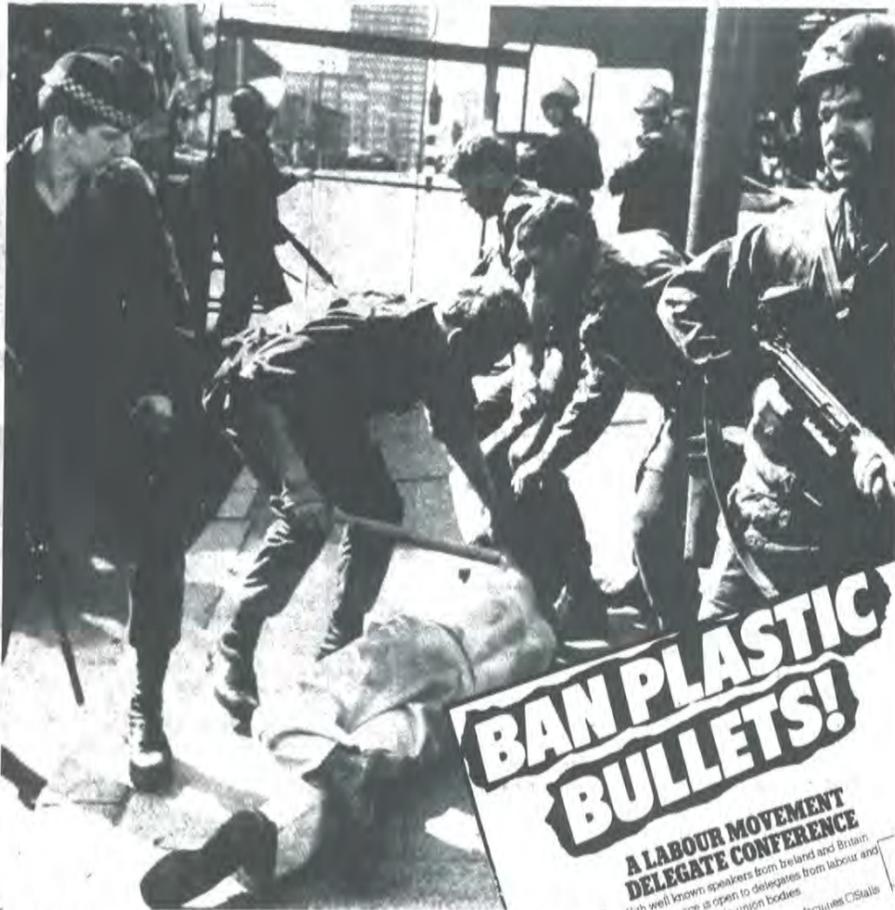
brave initiative in meeting Sein Fein leaders in the North, daily endorse the systematic savagery of the British Army and RUC.

At the conference Kathleen Stewart graphically illustrated that savagery. In 1976, her thirteen year old son, Brian, was killed by a British Army baton round. Kathleen described how a neighbour, who came forward as a witness of the killing received a volley of plastic bullets through her window on the night after Brian's death.

The Labour Party in Britain now has a policy of banning plastic bullets. There is clearly a need for a campaign to make sure that the pressure on them is maintained so that they stick by this policy. The record of the official Labour movement in support of their Irish brothers and sister is not good to put it mildly. It has been marked by a bipartisanism on the question with the Tories. It is vital to break with this legacy and, limited a reform as it is, banning plastic bullets would be a step in the right direction.

The difficulty of ensuring that this comes to fruition was highlighted at the conference. Owen Carron, the nationalist MP for Fermanagh and South Tyrone, who was elected after Bobby Sands MP died on hunger strike, provoked many of the Labour movement dignitaries who had sponsored the conference to withdraw their support. People who will not share a platform with a republican MP cannot be trusted to a consistent fight against the Army's brutality, let alone its presence, in Northern Ireland.

Indeed for Clive Soley MP, who sent a written message to the conference, it was mainly a question of altering the methods of army terror. His message



included a lengthy consideration of improving snatch squads techniques and bringing in more water-cannon as humane replacements for plastic bullets.

His message shed an instructive light on the weakness of the conference and of its main organisers, the Labour Committee on Ireland. By concentrating exclusively on plastic bullets they are hoping to make the Irish issue one for purely humanitarian concern. This way Labour "friends of Ireland" can be wooed into a 'broad based' campaign. Perhaps and only perhaps, it may be possible to go further on the Irish issue at some time in the future. Such is the false hope of the LCI.

While it is legitimate to campaign against plastic bullets, it is not enough. It will not overcome the enormous difficulties that face supporters of the Irish struggle in winning solidarity with that struggle inside the Labour movement. In this sense Owen Carron's hopes for a movement in Ireland similar to CND, are understandable (he would desperately like to see a mass movement on the issue) but illusory. Raising the use of plastic bullets by the army in the labour movement begs the question — What about the IRA?

Unless a campaign on Ireland can answer this with a clear anti-imperialist answer, one that says get the troops out now and recognise self-determination for the Irish people as a whole, then mileage for a campaign limited to plastic bullets will not be very great. The LCI run all the dangers of previous Irish solidarity campaigns. By dodging issues they hope to enlist more support. It simply will not happen. The fact that the conference did not take policy decisions means that even those mobilised for the day are now not committed to any action in the future.

Workers Power will continue to argue that, while campaigns around limited issues have their place, they are no substitute for the welding together of an anti-imperialist nucleus firmly rooted in the Labour movement. Though this may begin, and even for a long time remain a small influence, it will be a surer pledge for the future than all the fine words of Clive Soley and co. It can begin a struggle to get the troops out altogether, and not just to minimise the most vicious aspects of their presence.

by Paul Mason

## STOP THE SHOW TRIALS - FREE EDMUND BALUKA!

The Jaruzelski regime in Poland is about to launch a series of show trials against Solidarity leaders and the leadership of the Workers Self-Defence Committee (KOR). They are likely to be charged under Articles 123 and 128 which deal with plotting to overthrow the state by force — charges which carry the possibility of death sentences.

The Central Committee has just published a 24 page pamphlet entitled "Extremists" which outlines the "crimes" of those held in prison. Harking back to the good old days of Joe Stalin, they have, sure enough discovered an international Trotskyist conspiracy: "Many facts show that the oppositionists were trying to make Poland a starting point for world revolution and light the fuse of the

Trotskyist apocalypse". (Quoted in the Sunday Times on the 27th, Feb. '83)

It is ironic, but revealing, that the Stalinists have to accuse the leaders of KOR and Solidarity of being Trotskyists (of course they are not). It demonstrates the continued ingrained fear on the part of the Polish bureaucratic caste of the only revolutionary movement which threatens to consign them and their parasitic masters in Moscow to the dustbin of history. It shows them appealing to the most backward and conservative layers of Polish society with their calls for order and vigilance against 'extremism'.

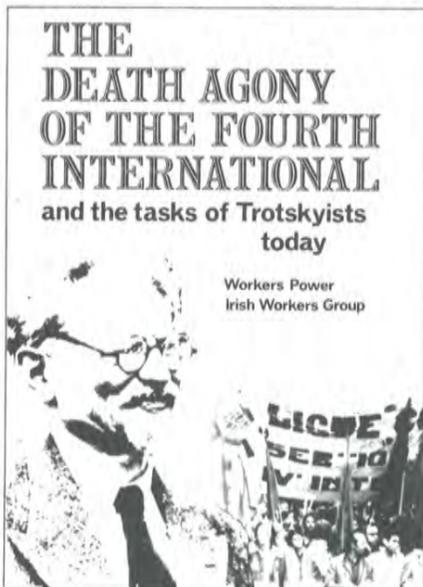
It is doubly ironic given these fearless defenders of socialism, who stepped in "to prevent counter-revolution", have just released all the members of the Confederation for an Independent Poland (KPN) bar its leader. The KPN is explicitly committed to re-establishing capitalism in a Poland redrawn on

the geographical basis of Pilsudski's Poland where only 70% of the population were Polish. The Polish Stalinists clearly prioritise their real enemies.

One of its prisoners is Edmund Baluka. Baluka was a leader of the workers strikes in Szczecin in 1970 - 71. After being forced into exile for many years he returned illegally to Poland in the Spring of 1981. He regained his old job in the Warski shipyard and was involved in the workers movement there until he was arrested after the military coup. Baluka is known for his Marxist views and as a result has been held in isolation in prison ever since. It now appears he is gravely ill after four weeks on hunger strike.

All socialists and trade unionists should immediately protest at these show trials and in particular urgently take up the case of Edmund Baluka. Resolutions and telegram/letters of protest calling for his release should be sent to: The Governor, Areszt Sledczy U1., Kaszubska, Szczecin, Poland.

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CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

On this basis the best conditions would exist for stopping the return to undivided power of the far right. Their unhindered dominance will mean a thoroughgoing witch-hunt — the merciless scrapping of even the pathetically limited reforms passed by Labour Conferences in the last few years — a new incomes policy deal with the TUC and to crown it all a likely coalition with their erstwhile bosom buddies in the SDP-half of the Alliance. Against this we must fight in the party for:

- \* No handover of the leadership to Healey behind the backs of the membership.
- \* No electoral college before a democratic election campaign in the unions and the constituencies.
- \* For candidates for leader and deputy leader pledged to stop the witch-hunt and re-instate the expelled lefts.
- \* To embody conference decisions in the manifesto unbowdlerised by shadow cabinet horse trading.

\* Benn, as the self-appointed champion of democracy, should announce that he will stand come what may if Foot resigns.

\* There must be an anti-witch-hunt slate for the NEC to sweep out the hard right and fake lefts.

\* Kick out the witch-hunting MPs — de-select them now.

\* Not an inch to the witch-hunt — no recognition by the constituencies of the Militant expulsions.

\* No registration — the register is the instrument of the purge. Clear resolutions to throw it out and a campaign in their support for conference must begin now.

On this basis the gathering offensive of the Right can be stopped in its tracks. The craven rallying around the totally discredited Foot is merely a signal to the Right to put the boot in. The best form of defence is attack: attack the Tories and their agents in the Labour movement!

## IRAN'S REVOLUTION

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leadership, into a real leading soviet. On the other hand it was also a potential constituent assembly, with all classes represented on a national scale. In which direction the People's Assembly developed depended on how the revolutionary forces within it fought to build it.

A revolutionary strategy should have involved ensuring that all delegates were elected by rank and file factory and workplace committees (many delegates were elected by the trade union leaderships). It should have concentrated on building other soviets outside of La Paz, spreading them on a national scale, calling for the construction of soldiers' committees in the army and for their delegates to attend such soviets. Only with such a network of local soviets would the Assembly have truly become a central, national soviet. It should have supported and encouraged the peasant land seizures that were taking place and organised the building of poor peasants' committees. Revolutionaries should have raised the slogan "All power to the Popular Assembly" and counterposed the call for a "Workers' and Peasants' Government" to the bonapartist regime of Torres. Above all they should have fought for the arming of the workers, and the formation of a workers' militia.



Guillermo Lora

This was not the perspective of the POR(Lora). The POR opposed the slogan of "All power to the People's Assembly" as "ultra-left": "The Assembly should put itself at the head of an insurrection, but it is only at the opportune moment, that is to say, when the masses have concretely begun to dispute state power with the military government, that the slogan "All power to the Popular Assembly" should have been raised. To do this in May or June 1971 would have been just empty rhetoric, an irresponsible game, no matter how carefully people believed they were elaborating the slogan."

It is the merest demagoguery to stigmatise the call for a workers' and peasants' government or the expression of no confidence in Torres as an immediate and adventurist call to insurrection. This demagoguery is an infallible sign of Menshevism.

By posing the question of power before the masses, by developing concrete slogans that point in this direction, revolutionaries help lead the masses forward towards a revolutionary solution. The refusal to do this is an abdication of the tasks of a revolutionary leadership in favour of waiting for the spontaneous upsurge of the masses. Lenin did not wait for the masses to spontaneously call for a soviet state in 1917. He raised the slogan "All power to the soviets" - even whilst they were led by Mensheviks - as a means of winning the masses to the struggle for a soviet state. In Bolivia the alternative to developing the Popular Assembly into a genuine soviet and doing this, in part, through the call for "all power" to it, was to confine it to being a talking shop, while relying on and supporting Torres' regime until the danger from the right had passed.

In practice the Popular Assembly which had effectively one session lasting a few weeks became a parliament, representative of the masses but without any power. Torres, who at first refused to recognise it, later declared it a "consultative" body. Within the Assembly it appears that the POR(Lora) and the PCB acted as a voting bloc, while Lechin balanced between this wing and the peasant and student organisations. When the question of co-management of COMIBOL came up, following a proposal to develop "workers' participation" in the industry, the POR(Lora) again showed its inability to offer an independent class lead. Torres' offer was quite clearly designed to win support from the workers in order to demobilise them in their independent struggle. Participation in a key industry would, via the medium of state appointed union bureaucrats, undermine an independent struggle for workers' control of the industry. Under these circumstances participation, itself, was not ruled out. Trotsky was clear that within state-capitalist enterprises in semi-colonial countries, participation could, only could, further the struggle for real workers' control. However, he was clear that in no way should such a tactic be dressed up as the strategy for socialist revolution. Writing of Cardenas' attempt in Mexico in 1939 to enlist the participation of workers within the nationalised oil industry Trotsky stated: "It would of course be a disastrous error, an outright deception, to assert that the road to

socialism passes, not through the road of proletarian revolution, but through nationalisation by the bourgeois state of various branches of industry and their transfer into the hands of the workers' organisations"

In Bolivia it was particularly urgent to dispel the illusion that Torres' nationalisation plus participation was a path to revolution. It was designed to be a block to revolution. However, Lora, when the Assembly agreed to accept co-management with an equal number of workers and company representatives on boards, plus the right to appoint a general manager, precisely fell into the trap of suggesting that this was a revolution by the back door: "Whoever controls Bolivia's mines becomes master of the country. Proposing control of the mines by the working class implied making the official government unworkable and relegating it to a totally useless role... Sooner or later the question of power would arise. Moreover the struggle to secure this co-participation was the best means of mobilising the masses towards the capture of power." (Our emphasis).

If the POR(Lora) offered few correct tactics during this revolutionary period neither did its twin POR(Gonzales). This group as part of the USFI was fully committed to the guerillaist strategy adopted at the Ninth World Congress. The politics of "guerillaism" had an even more disastrous record in Bolivia than in other South American countries. Guevara's guerilla "foco" had been hunted down and wiped out by Bolivia's US trained counter-insurgency forces in 1967. Remnants of Geuvara's organisation the ELN still existed and in July 1970 about 100 guerillas, many ex-Christian Democratic youth, opened a new guerilla war in Teoponte. Four months later only six survived having been mercilessly hunted down by the Bolivian military.

This was the perspective the POR(Gonzales) not only advocated for the Bolivian masses but was actively involved in. As a result they had little involvement in the mass struggles which prevented the October 1970 coup, seeing them as merely side shows to the "real" armed struggle. Thus they could argue in a statement issued shortly after the October mobilisations "The revolutionary process ripening in the vitals of the people in the depths of the mines, in the factories and universities...has its fullest expression in the armed struggle and guerilla warfare." (POR (Gonzales) Statement, Intercontinental Press, Nov. 1970).

The POR(Gonzales) as a result were not part of the Political Command and were bureaucratically excluded as a political party from the Popular Assembly on the initiative of the POR(Lora)/PCB bloc. While the POR (Gonzales) made a number of correct criticisms of POR(Lora) for instance, over the negotiations with Torres, they remained politically crippled by their "guerillaism" and "processism." While they called for an armed struggle to overthrow the capitalist regime of Torres, they were incapable of developing any slogans or tactics which addressed the crucial questions of soviets, soldiers' committees or workers' militia. The struggle for power and the arming of the workers, was seen exclusively in military-technical terms. The construction of a "People's Army" was seen in total isolation from the political struggle and its impact on the rank and file troops. Their attitude to the Assembly was one of passive propagandism equally as fatal as Lora's approach: "The left wing to which the POR(Gonzales) belongs has developed the idea that the Popular Assembly would be a body that would discuss national problems and solutions for them but would leave the power in the hands of the mass organisations (unions, popular militia or People's Army.)" (Interview with Gonzales Moscoso, Rouge, 17.5.71).

So both the parties which claimed to represent Trotskyism within the Bolivian working class were incapable of tackling the fundamental problems of a revolutionary situation. Although their centrism



General Banzer

took different forms, POR(Lora)'s adaptation to the petit-bourgeois nationalist Torres regime, POR(Gonzales)'s adaptation to the petit-bourgeois Castroite and Guevarist currents, made both parties shy away from the crucial tasks confronting them - the construction of soviets and the fight for power and the interlinked task of breaking up the bourgeois army. Both saw this latter task as primarily a technical one. Trotsky, drawing on the experience of the 1905 revolution, summed up the importance of political agitation and mass struggle in the fight to break up the army: "The Army's political mood, that great unknown of every revolution, can be determined only in the process of a clash between the soldiers and the people...the majority hesitates and awaits an impulse from outside. This majority is capable of laying down its arms, or eventually of pointing its bayonets at reaction, only if it begins to believe in the possibility of a people's victory. Such a belief is not created by political agitation alone. Only when the soldiers become convinced that the people have come out onto the streets for a life and death struggle - not to demonstrate against the government but to overthrow it - does it become psychologically possible for them to 'cross over to the side of the people.'" (Trotsky, 1905)

The POR(Lora) with its critical support for Torres and the POR(Gonzales) with its disdain for mass struggles failed miserably to provide any such leadership to the working class rank and file of the Army. This is all the more criminal when we consider how willing and able to carry through this task the Bolivian proletariat had shown itself in 1952 and 1971.

#### BANZER'S COUP AND THE AFTERMATH

On the 19th August 1971, the Army struck. Led by General Banzer and supported by the MNR and the right wing generals whom Torres had kept in place, the army occupied key cities. As late as the 23rd August the Political Command and the POR (Lora) were still pleading for arms from Torres. The results were predictable. Torres refused to give arms on the grounds that it would split the army. As the army moved on La Paz, having crushed resistance in

other cities, students and workers put up a heroic, if hopeless, resistance to the coup. According to one estimate between them they mustered 2,000 ancient Mausers against the major forces of the Bolivian army and airforce. Hundreds were killed in the coup which ushered in eight years of brutal repression.

In exile, the parties of the People's Assembly proceeded to form a "Revolutionary Anti-Imperialist United Front". Despite tagging on the word "Revolutionary" this front was in fact a popular front built around a purely democratic programme of struggle. In its ranks were the POR(Lora) the Pro-Moscow and Pro-Chinese CPs, the POR(Gonzales), various other parties and General Torres!

Lora's POR had the most clearly worked out position on the nature of this front. In their programme they argue that while before the coup the perspective of insurrection and socialism was on the agenda, after the coup it was a matter of fixing different objectives. These objectives turn out to be entirely democratic: "the reconquest of democratic guarantees...defence of trade union organisations, recognition of their federations and confederations...respect for human life and well-being of prisoners". (Programmatic Bases of the POR - G. Lora.)

While obviously a revolutionary party would fight for such demands, alongside all other parties, to limit the struggle in advance to this is pure stageism. To join in a bloc with the principal betrayer of the revolution was nothing less than crossing class lines. Lora's programme argues: "Anti-imperialist fronts can be grouped into two categories: anti-imperialist fronts led by the bourgeoisie and petit-bourgeoisie and those led by the proletariat. Stalinists joined and defended the first type."

But if the proletariat, or parties claiming to represent the proletariat, subordinate their programme to that of the bourgeoisie or petit-bourgeoisie, it makes no difference who leads it in struggle, it is a popular front tying the working class to the chariot wheels of the bourgeoisie. What were the aims of the FRA? "The need is undeniably to build a fighting unity with all the revolutionary democratic and progressive forces so that the great battle can be begun in conditions offering a real perspective for a popular and national government." (Manifesto of FRA, Intercontinental Press, Dec. 1971). It pointed out that the "task is to close ranks around the FRA, organised by the forces that fought in the battle of August (Torres ?- WP) to win the battle for the people." It bound all organisations to the "fundamental line of the founding documents" and in case anyone dared to criticise this popular front it declared any form of "sectarianism" in this respect to be "counter-revolutionary."

By joining such a front a "Trotskyist" party was not only covering up for the betrayers of the revolution but was tying the proletariat to the bourgeois programme. This is what both the POR groups were doing. The POR(Gonzales) tried to cover its traces by saying its participation had only "a tactical character" (!) while criticising itself for not publishing its criticisms of the manifesto. (If it had, it would of course, have been thrown out). The POR(Lora) defended and continues to defend to this day its record and its tactics, both of which were endorsed by the Lambert led Organising Committee for the Reconstruction of the Fourth International which it had joined shortly earlier.

The tragedy of the Bolivian revolutions - 1952 and 1970/1 - was that no revolutionary organisation existed which could have led Bolivian workers and peasants in a struggle for genuine proletarian power. It proved once again that a centrist leadership is invariably unable to lead a revolution, and will, if it is a serious force within the proletariat, contribute to its bloody defeat. ■

by Stuart King

## POGROMS FOLLOW P.L.O. DEFEAT

With developments in the Lebanon and the results of the Palestinian National Council, the scale of the defeat inflicted on the Palestinians in the summer of 1982 becomes ever more clear. In the Lebanon, having achieved the withdrawal of the bulk of the PLO fighters, the Lebanese Phalangists are now conducting a series of terror campaigns to drive Palestinians out of their homes. Aided and abetted by the Israeli troops, their aim is to drive them first into the now undefended camps and later, using the fear of repetition of the Sabra and Shatila pogroms, to drive them out of Lebanon altogether.

Israel clearly intends to hang on in the Lebanon, despite friendly US pressure, until as much as possible of this "sanitisation" is carried out. Her demands for permanent military posts inside Lebanon and the strengthening of Israel's puppet, Major Haddad, in the Lebanon demonstrates the Zionists determination to reduce the Lebanese government to an Israeli protectorate if they can get away

with it. At the same time it has placed Sharon, the real butcher of Sabra and Shatila, in charge of the enormously expanded Zionist settlement programme on the West Bank. The massive financial incentives for settlers are only possible because of American financial largesse to the state of Israel.

The ramifications of the defeat have reverberated through the PLO. Arafat has been desperately trying to manoeuvre the whole of the PLO to accept the American peace proposals, whilst Libya and Syria are willing to split the PLO in pursuit of their own national interests. But the basis that the more militant sections of the PLO had for resisting compromises with US imperialism has been severely undermined. Instead of a powerful armed base in the Lebanon, with freedom of movement and training for the various PLO armed wings, the bulk of the fighters are now locked up in what amount to virtual prison camps in the eight "friendly" Arab countries which offered to be their hosts.

Arafat banked on this weakness to be able to bring all the PLO factions into line at the Palestinian National Council. While the fiery debates took place before the be-suited and well dressed ranks of professors, doctors and professionals who domin-

ate the PNC, the real discussions took place elsewhere.

George Habash, head of the Peoples Front for the Liberation of Palestine could declare resoundingly during the daytime debates: "The Reagan Plan says No to a Palestinian state, No to the PLO. Well, we say No to the Reagan Plan, No to the US and No to any plan that denies our rights."

But during the evening sessions conducted between the faction leaders at Arafat's secret seaside villa, Habash's and other rejectionist leaders' "No's" sounded less resounding. The Reagan plan was not considered "a sound basis for a just and lasting peace"; it was "insufficient". The Fez Plan proposed by the Arab League in November 1981 - which contained implicitly the right of Israel to exist as a state - was accepted. On Jordan, the Council accepted a part of Reagan's plans; the principle of "confederation" with the Jordan of King Hussein, the perpetrator of Black September.

This new alliance between Arafat, Habash and Hawatmeh of the Democratic Front may be a fragile one. It is based on the weakness of the leadership of the Palestinian masses and the dispersion of their leading fighters. Above all it depends on the ability of Arafat to deliver the promises made to by American Imperialism concerning the West Bank and the Lebanon. Those promises are unlikely to be kept. ■

# workers power

# Stop the pit closures

# ALL OUT NOW!

THE SOUTH WALES miners have voted for a strike that could, if victorious, turn the tide on the Tories. The ballot for strike action might have seemed close, 9,714 to 7,817, but it did not include 5,000 miners already on strike. The majority for action is solid. The 23,000 South Wales miners have placed themselves in the forefront of a decisive battle with Thatcher that has implications for the future of the whole public sector.

With the scalp of Kinneil under their belts, courtesy of the Communist Party, Mick McGahey and the rest of the NUM leadership, the Tories are set on savaging the South Wales coalfield. Despite an estimated ten years of life left in it, the NCB, with Tory butchery, have decided to close Tymawr Lewis Merthyr Colliery at Pontypridd.

The strength of the NUM is an obstacle to the Tories' plan for a complete scaling down and restructuring of the public sector. The militancy of the miners forced a remarkable turn around in Tory pit-closure plans in 1981. Since then, however, their tactics have been more subtle and more effective. They have played on the NUM's major weakness - its legacy of federalism, stemming from the days of its existence as a series of separate area federations. Instead of going ahead with a national plan of pit-closures, the Tories are closing pits area by area. This way they can play on regional divisions. They also have divisions within regions (like South Wales) to play on, thanks to the Labour-imposed productivity schemes, master minded by Tony Benn as Energy Secretary. In South Wales this accounts for the sizeable minority who voted against a strike. These miners came from the more profitable pits of the west where productivity bonuses are much higher.

By picking on an old pit the NCB obviously hoped to avoid a fight.

Having already picked off the Scottish miners over Kinneil and the Kent miners over the Snowdown Colliery, they were obviously more confident to tackle the Welsh miners. They obviously intend to try and isolate the struggle there. This must be prevented. The strike in South Wales must become the starting point of a major struggle to smash their plans to smother them.

The waterworkers' strike shows that the Tories are not invincible. Determined action can put them to flight. The signs are that there is no lack of determination amongst the South Wales miners. When the NCB refused to even discuss investment plans for Lewis Merthyr, 28 miners occupied the pit and over 500 struck. The occupying miners stayed 1,500 feet underground in freezing conditions for four days in a bid to rally support for the fight. Other pits heeded this heroic example. By the end of February 5,000 miners from 9 of South Wales' 33 pits were out on strike against the closures. These miners knew that the closure of Lewis Merthyr would only mark the start of the NCB's campaign. At least six other older pits are under immediate threat. Others are on the NCB's hit list. The offer of job redeployment would inevitably be withdrawn if these closures went ahead. The closure of Lewis Merthyr would, in the long term, mean redundancies.

With the rank and file taking courageous, militant action, the union leaders, including the 'lefts' have been dragging their feet. The South Wales Area Executive has delayed action already. While the NCB refused any concessions on increased investment plans, or closures, the Executive called off the strike action originally planned for January 16th. Then, when the action of the rank and file forced the Executive to take a stand, they held a delegate conference at Bridgend on February 24th. Instead of sanctioning the existing strike and pit-occupation and calling out other pits immediately, the ballot was called. This outraged the hundreds of rank and file miners who lobbied the conference. They

chanted "Out Now!" and marched into the hall. The ballot result means that they will now have to lead a strike. Miners in the Welsh pits must make sure that they do so under rank and file control.

But a strike in South Wales alone runs the risk of isolation. Other pits working will increase the prospect of coal supplies filtering through to Wales even if there is blacking. The stockpiles at the pits and depots give the NCB and their customers a possibility of sitting things out. For these reasons a national coal strike must be called. South Wales must not be left to fight alone. If this area is defeated it will give the green light for the Tories and their axeman MacGregor to proceed with their plans for massive closures in the coal industry.

Yet with the need for national action obvious, the national leader, Arthur Scargill, is sitting on his hands. He has observed - as others did of Kinneil - that the Welsh strike "could spread like wildfire." But Arthur is so

far doing nothing to make sure that the fire is lit in other areas. In classic fashion, Scargill warned that if MacGregor was appointed boss of NCB, "He has got one difficulty to face: the National Union of Mineworkers and me." The Union, it seems, is Scargill.

Nevertheless, MacGregor must be chuckling to himself at Scargill's inaction. Instead of calling for action himself, Scargill has put the onus on the South Wales area itself. He declared, "The National Executive Committee will consider any call to implement this policy (action against closure - WP) in the interests of both the coal industry and the future of Britain." Scargill knows full well that the NEC is not meeting until March 10th. This would mean that South Wales will have to go it alone until then. It is well within Scargill's power to call an emergency NEC to organise a national ballot for action and a campaign - this time of meetings at the pit-heads, not gala rallies in non-mining

towns - to win the vote. Miners, not just from South Wales, should flood the national office with resolutions demanding that he do this.

The experience of Kinneil shows, though, that the entire union officialdom, including those like Scargill with militant reputations, are at best unreliable and at worst downright saboteurs. In this strike South Wales miners must take a lead themselves. Democratic rank and file strike committees based on the pits should co-ordinate mass picketing to ensure that no coal moves into or out from South Wales. Delegations must be sent out to every coalfield and every pit in the country. A direct appeal for support from strikers can set into action the sort of rolling strikes that took place in 1969 and 1970. In South Wales and, if a national strike is called, nationally, the Triple Alliance of railworkers, steelworkers and miners must be activated. If the Alliance is to prove itself at all useful it must launch strike action in each industry to help the miners win and help strengthen the resolve of workers in each industry to resist the Tory onslaught.

A national strike, mass pickets, and a strike by the Triple Alliance, would be a direct challenge to the Tories. It could smash their economic policies and their anti-union laws. Every effort must be made to make sure that the Welsh strike begins to make this a reality. ■



Picture: John Sturrock (Network)

## Lessons of the water strike

THE SETTLEMENT of the water workers' strike represents a serious setback for the Tories. Their 4% public sector pay limit has been openly breached and their image of invincibility has been tarnished. However, the claim by Mick Martin (T&G) that the unions had driven a coach and horses through Tory pay strategy is not true.

Seen as an annual settlement the final offer was worth approximately 7.8% which means that, after tax, most workers will only keep pace with inflation. Providing of course that inflation does not rise. Both the 16 month duration of the agreement and the provision for all further increases to be negotiated by local productivity deals are very dangerous parts of the deal. Next year, the waterworkers' claim will not coincide with those of, for example, the gas and electricity workers. In addition the national unity of the workforce will be broken down by local deals and variations in pay. In both respects this is entirely in keeping with a Tory strategy of getting rid of nationally negotiated annual pay deals.

It is only from the point of view of the union leaders, as a group, that the dispute and the agreement look

like an unqualified success. For the past four years the bureaucracy of the trade unions has consciously prevented the development of a really effective counter-attack by the working class against the Tory offensive. The steel strike was left isolated when the developing mass strike in South Wales was sabotaged by Murray and company. More recently the railway workers and the healthworkers have suffered defeats because their leaders prevented the kind of direct action that alone could guarantee victory.

Repeated defeats, however, undermine the relevance of the bureaucrats. Their value is in containing a militant rank and file. Defeats sap militancy. The role of the bureaucracy becomes less and less crucial. In some respects, therefore, they needed a 'victory'.

When Tom King, the Employment Secretary, claimed that the unions had 'targeted' the water industry for a well planned national dispute, he was probably right. It was essential for the union leaders to reassert their importance, to regain some of the lost ground in preparation for the legal onslaught they will suffer if the Tories are returned in the coming election. Their purpose in the water dispute was to prove their importance as negotiators, valuable experts in containing industrial action and in heading off militancy.

The water workers were an ideal choice for a bureaucratically planned and controlled dispute. There had never been a water strike before. There

is no history of rank and file organisation that might effectively challenge the leaders' control. The workforce is largely broken up into small scale and widely dispersed units and is internally divided between the manual workers and the skilled trades.

The whole course of the dispute and the ludicrously bureaucratic squabbles about the 'form of words' of the terms of reference of the arbitration committee bears witness to the leaders' plans. At every stage the possibility of escalating the action either by official calls for the blacking of chemical supplies or by calling out the skilled sections (which would have actually stopped the water supply) was opposed by the negotiators. The possibility of such action was a useful bargaining counter - but actually carrying it out threatened to extend the dispute beyond the bureaucrats' control.

The ending of the dispute, however, was the most eloquent proof of what the officials were up to. Ron Keating's insistence that the deal was worth 12% was aimed at convincing the members to go back to work. This theme was repeated by Len Murray who praised the steadfastness of the negotiators (no comment about the strikers) and smugly announced that, this time, it was Thatcher who had got egg on her face.

The bureaucratic way in which it was conducted and ended, however,

does not remove the fact that the strike did win a large increase over the initial offer. As such it was an important, if partial, victory for the working class. It has encouraged a more militant feeling amongst the rank and file. The South Yorkshire (WPC) branch of GMBATU passed a resolution condemning the leadership's handling of the strike, and called for a change in union rules to allow regular re-election of officials. These moves must be built on by militants.

The lessons of the water dispute must be learnt. The fight against the Tories is not only about wage increases. It is about the defence of union rights, jobs, social security and the health service. On these questions the methods of the union tops will not win even partial victories. The electricity and gas workers have it in their power to deal a death blow to the present government. But to deliver it their hands must not be tied by bureaucratic control of their disputes. All workers in those industries should strike, from the beginning, in an all-out effort to throw back the employers' offensive. They must be organised to control the dispute and negotiations at every level from that of the individual workplace to the national. Such a strike, alongside that of the miners, can create a tide of militancy that the bureaucrats cannot control and sidetrack and that the Tory government cannot withstand. ■

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