

workers power

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THE MINERS NEED YOU!



THE NCB and MacGregor, under direct orders from Thatcher, have given a firm thumbs down to any compromise with the NUM. Dashing the hopes of sections of the Executive who thought they had smelt a deal, MacGregor gave a provocative interview to the Times. In it he spelt out his plans for the coal industry. They amounted to a Thatcherite hatchet job on the miners.

Instead of offering job security, to miners he warned of massive redundancies. Instead of expanding investment he stuck by his capitalist principle that "No manager in any business should be making open-ended investment." In place of cosy collaboration with the NUM, he stressed the need for the bosses to recover "responsibility for managing the coal industry." For good measure this bloated and ignorant millionaire accused Arthur Scargill of being a "Jeckyll and Hyde".

A NEW "PLAN FOR COAL"?

Many NUM leaders, from Heathfield to Vincent, placed great hope in the production of a new Plan for Coal. MacGregor has made clear that he alone is writing the new Plan for Coal and it is to be one hundred percent in line with his and Thatcher's monetarist credo. Their aim remains a much smaller workforce and a broken NUM. After talking to MacGregor the bosses' house magazine, *The Economist*, stated bluntly, "The government wants to be seen to have broken the legendary power of the miners."

Faced with this renewed determination by the bosses it is vital that the labour movement closes ranks with the miners. The NUM Executive meeting on June 14th decided to make the strike bite into industry. Already it has cost the bosses a 1.5% drop in production over the last three months. They are being hit by the strike. But to bring about a speedy victory more needs to be done.

With railworkers taking action in support of the NUM in Nottinghamshire it is vital that the NUM now deal with its own scabs. They must be ordered to strike by a fixed date and addressed at mass union meetings by Executive members and strikers before that date.

If they refuse to obey this order they must be suspended from the union and lose all the protection that it gives to them. This situation will make the waverers think again, bolster the striking miners and improve the chances of sustaining solidarity from other workers in the scab areas. Any moves towards either a breakaway union or court action can be fought by determined action.

As well the NUM leadership should make clear that it will not recognise the recently elected non-striking officials in Nottinghamshire. In fact committees elected by the striking miners must receive full

official recognition and control of finances, NUM property etc.

The continued attempt to make the strike 100% solid must go hand in hand with winning more and more solidarity action, including strike action alongside the miners. ISTC leaders in South Wales are trying to suggest that the miners strike is a threat to their jobs. They want to continue with the luxury of dispensations to their plants in the vain hope that this will save their jobs. Unfortunately the granting of these dispensations in the first place has strengthened selfish anti-solidarity views.

John Folwey, the regional ISTC officer, has warned that he will organise scabbing to help bring coal and coke into the Llanwern steelworks. The ISTC leaders are well on the road to turning their union into a yellow bosses house association. Steelworkers and

others - rail, transport, engineers - need to be told loud and clear that if the miners lose not one job in Britain will be safe. If the NUM's power is broken it will be a thousand times more difficult to win any future sectional battle.

How can this danger be averted? An angry Mick McGahey has said that the miners must "bring other forces of the working class into operation." He said, "Let us bite into other industries, stop steel production, halt industry in this country."

To turn these words into action the NUM must change its tactics. Deals with Buckton, Knapp or the bosses' latest darling Bill Sirs will not win action. An organised, concerted, direct appeal to the rank and file of other unions will. Thousands of miners must be despatched to address workplace meetings and union branches with the message - don't just collect for us, strike with us, and defend your own jobs as well.

STOP ALL FUEL!

To enforce blacking, picketing must be stepped up. Every steel plant and coking depot should be picketed. Crucially a major turn towards picketing the power stations should be made. The massive use of oil and imported coal to keep the energy flow going means we must demand that the movement of all fuel not just coal is stopped.

Winning action - strike action - from the rank and file of the movement is vital. But if we are to "bite into industry" we need a general strike. The best way of stopping industry is to get the workers in industry to stop themselves to stop it.

But piecemeal rank and file action alone is unlikely to get us a general strike in time to save the miners. Nor is ignoring the TUC a good tactic for preventing them selling out the miners' strike. The action of allies such as Buckton and Knapp is taking the railworkers out of the line of fire, shows that the union leaders are capable of selling the miners out right now.

FORCE THEM TO ACT!

To prevent this we must take away their alibi that Buckton (Chairman of the TUC) voiced after the last General Council, "We have not been asked to become involved." Certainly their dubious skills as negotiators are not required. We do not want anymore NGAs or GCHQs. But their control over the funds and resources of the labour movement and their power to call a general strike means that we must make demands on them. We must force them to act.

The miners' strike should not need to stretch into the winter months. A general strike could win it in weeks. But while we must force the TUC to launch it, we must not leave it under their control. By building action committees, based on the miners and other workers' struggling with them, we can lay the basis for an alternative force to control and lead a general strike to victory. We can create the means to prevent a TUC sellout. They can also act as a powerful pressure on the leaders to force them to act. Our slogans in the coming weeks must be: **MAKE THE STRIKE SOLID! BUILD RANK & FILE LINKS! FORCE THE TUC TO CALL A GENERAL STRIKE! NO COMPROMISE - ON TO VICTORY!**

JOE GREEN

ANOTHER MINER, 55 year old Joe Green, has been killed on the picket line. Joe Green was one of a very small number of pickets at a West Yorkshire power station.

Though the instrument of his death was a scab truck driver recklessly driving through the small picket, the ultimate responsibility for it lies with Thatcher, MacGregor and the miner-hating muckrags from Fleet Street that serve them.

Human life itself and the basic decencies of life that it is only possible to afford with a job, are matters of no concern to these creatures. We should not be surprised that Bloody Margaret, who personally sent 500 Argentine sailors to horrible deaths in the freezing waters of the South Atlantic, should have no scruples about expending the lives of workers in Britain fighting for their present and future livelihood.

Her orchestrated media campaign has presented picket lines as fair game. Her police force has battered pickets, crushed pickets, and in the case of David Jones could well have caused the death

of a picket. They have eagerly encouraged scab lorry drivers to plough through defenceless lines of fellow workers - whose "crime" is to want to talk to and persuade the drivers.

Despite their terror against us, our ranks are becoming more solid. Joe Green's tragic and untimely death should make clear to miners who are still working what scabbing means, and what carrying on working is encouraging - cowboy drivers backed by police causing the deaths of striking miners.

In the aftermath of Joe Green's death two things should happen. The picket line must become bigger and organised to defend itself against future similar attacks from scabs or police. Secondly, the strike must be fought on to victory. As Scargill said: "Every miner, every trade unionist in Britain must ensure that he did not die in vain."

Our condolences go to Joe Green's family and friends. We will, for our part, redouble our efforts to make sure his death was not in vain. ■

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LABOUR'S 'BROAD CHURCH' OR A COMBAT PARTY?

POLITICS is a word that has an automatic bad odour in Britain. A hundred and one phrases testify to this. People prefer to "Keep politics out of things" or to refuse to "talk about religion and politics". To be politically motivated is to automatically suspect. In the labour movement, 'Politics should be kept out of trade unionism' and are relegated to the Labour Party. The enormous size, power and prestige of the unions as compared with the Labour Party also reflects the fact that politics comes a poor second to trade unionism for most British workers.

Yet this hostility to politics does not mean that political ideas do not make their appearance in the heads and practice of trade unionists. The problem is that the politics are the politics of reformism, of the Labour Party. They are based on the idea that capitalism can be peacefully and gradually reformed. Harmony can be created on an installment plan. To achieve this, and here is where these reformist political ideas make themselves felt in practice, trade unionists, particularly rank and file members, must leave politics to the professional politicians. Political activity for workers should consist of putting a cross on a ballot paper once every five years and no more!

This 'British tradition' is a strong one because of the longevity of the trade union movement - 150 years at least - and the relatively late appearance of a political party of the working class. Only in 1906 did the Labour Party get a name. Only in 1918 could individual workers join it. It was born as a federation of unions that wanted their legal rights to organise and bargain protected against a rabidly anti-working class judiciary. Having discovered that the two bosses' parties - Conservatives and Liberals refused either point blank or with oily evasiveness to legislate to remove the judge-made anti-union 'laws, the union leaders slowly, reluctantly and grudgingly set about stitching together a Party.

CHAPEL SOCIALISTS

They were obliged to turn to the few thousand strong Independent Labour Party to help them form an electoral machine. The latter, led by Keir Hardy and Ramsay MacDonald were a bunch of soft hearted (and soft headed) Chapel socialists who believed Socialism was about "seeing the light" or being morally uplifted. How you got to the great by and by was never very clear for them.

Some, like George Lansbury who had been a Marxist in his youth, turned a sympathetic eye on strikes and union action. Others like MacDonald never showed the remotest sympathy for workers in struggle. All they could agree on was the need for an organisationally independent group of MPs linked to the unions. So over-riding was this belief in Parliament that the ILP, despite its professed 'socialism', repeatedly opposed any attempt to commit the new Labour Party to it.

The union leaders were at one with them in this. When at the end of the First World War Europe was aflame with revolution, whilst the Bolsheviks held power in Russia, when short-lived workers' council governments ruled in Bavaria and Hungary, when German and Austrian Social Democrats formed governments that claimed to be socialising the economy, the British union leaders feared that these dangerous ideas might cross the Channel. They decided hurriedly to get Sidney Webb, a lower middle class social scientist who thought the working class too ignorant and vulgar to be left with the task of its own emancipation, to draft a 'socialist objective' for them. Hence the famous Clause Four came into existence. A commitment not so much to socialism as to a benign bureaucratic state capitalism.

The Webbs and their Fabian Society provided the fledgling Labour Party with parliamentary expertise (including the upper class Beatrice's instructions to Labour ministers' wives on court etiquette). Labour's 'socialism' was adopted to fend off Communism which had emerged as a serious minority within the workers movement. Whenever there had been serious class struggles amongst the miners of South Wales, amongst the engineering workers of Clydeside, Sheffield and South and East London - revolutionary Marxists had gained significant influence as real fighters for the working class. In 1920 a unified party was formed largely made up of these militants. When it applied to affiliate to the Labour Party, which still retained its federal structure, it was turned down flat. Whilst bourgeois careerists of every stripe were leaving the sinking ship of Liberalism and being piped aboard the Labour Party with full honours, the Clydeside shop stewards and the South Wales miners rank and file leaders were persona non grata in the 'political wing of the labour movement.'

Labour's 'Broad church' had no room in it for Communists. It was a church where the Scribes and Pharisees had occupied the pulpit and the front seats. Where the preaching and praying of the MPs town councillors and union officials drowned out the voice of the ordinary workers whose main duty was to dig deep when the collection plate came round.

Thus Labour's course was set for parliamentary office. Sixty years ago this year it had its first stab at it and lo and behold - it wasn't the inhabitants of the Pall Mall Clubs that got it in the back but the poor of Poplar and the workers and peasants of India. "The Empire is safe with me" remarked



The real face of the bosses' state

Jimmy Thomas to the King. Indeed it was!

Labour governments, in 1924, in 1929, in 1945 came to power when the old bosses' parties were at their wits end as to what to do about the crisis of their system. Each time, Labour, with the aid of the TUC, demobilised the working class offensive that was building up and attacked the militant leaders of such struggles. Communist newspaper editors were arrested, unemployed marchers were set upon by the police, striking dockers' leaders arrested and troops were sent into the docks, May day celebrations forbidden. The result was demoralisation and eventual electoral defeat, opening the way to even more vicious Tory governments able to take advantage of the working classes' divided ranks.

In a highly concentrated form this story repeated itself after 1974. After a few half hearted reforms the Labour Government was soon pursuing a three pronged attack against the working class - massive cuts in social welfare spending, real wage reducing 'limits' and various assorted participation and productivity schemes. The two most advanced and militant sectors of the struggles of the early 1970s, the engineers and car workers on the one hand and the miners on the other, were singled out for this treatment.

PARTICIPATION

The AUEW and the NUM rank and file militancy had given Wilson and Co a terrible fright. They were determined to prevent this happening again and devised the pit productivity scheme which bears the major responsibility for today's divisions in the NUM. Likewise they pushed through the participation schemes in British Leyland that gutted the stewards' organisation and left it completely vulnerable to the hatchet man Michael Edwardes (whose trainee assistant in the job was none other than Ian MacGregor). Indeed it was the NUM sponsored Labour minister Eric Varley who brought this man into the country.

Whilst sections of the movement resisted individual attacks by Labour, the 'Left' union leaders made sure they were isolated and got little or no support from the rest of the movement. The CP (a far cry from its revolutionary ancestor of the early 1920s) pursuing its 'Broad Left' policy guarded the left flank of the leaders, Scanlon, Jones and Co, commended the participation schemes in the car industry and downplayed the rank and file aspects of the broad lefts.

The 'parties' of the working class not only failed to play a positive role in leading the great industrial strength of the early 1970s to political victories over the bosses and their party, they played a negative role in demobilising, weakening and dissipating this strength.

Yet the answer was not to 'keep politics out' but to replace reformist politics - the politics of the parliamentarians and the union official, with revolutionary politics.

This is the only politics consistent with work place and trade union democracy, militant defence of workers' interests, working class unity in struggle and internationalism. Only by being solidly committed to the goal of abolishing capitalism and replacing it with working class power can one be a consistent fighter for the immediate interests of the working class.

Revolutionaries can never reduce politics to the Labour Party and its affairs. For us politics were raised in the strikes against Heath's Industrial Relations Act and wage controls. We seek to link such struggles to demands and tactics - the building of councils of action, workers' defence squads, the general strike - that can politicise them in a revolutionary manner. This is our objective in the miners' strike today. Political issues are at the very heart of the strike. Moreover for us workers' direct action is absolutely pivotal in the struggle for socialism. We do not write off the struggles of 1970-74, or the struggles of today as 'industrial' while calling those in the Labour Party of 1979-1982 'political'. This is a false and dangerous position.

Yet various groups calling themselves revolutionary, in the aftermath of Labour's 1979 defeat (and for some before this) in practice if not in theory adopted this very idea. In the name of an endeavour to politicise the working class' struggles these groups became engulfed by the politics of 'left' labourism.

Militant, for example, flourished like ivy on the decayed hulk of the Labour Party but at the price of tailoring its 'revolutionary' or 'Trotskyist' politics to the reformist perspective of a peaceful, parliamentary road to socialism. A socialist majority in parliament helped by a mass movement outside, could pass an Enabling Act, nationalise the 200 monopolies and bingo, there's socialism! The capitalist state, the general strike, workers militia, soviets, civil war, armed insurrection, revolutionary party and the proletarian dictatorship all get dropped from the Militant programme. Politics became for them and still is the hopeless struggle for a Labour Government pledged to socialist policies.

Various other 'Trotskyists' developed in the late 1970s and early 1980s the perspective of riding the Bennite bandwagon. *Socialist Organiser* was in the vanguard of those pushing the idea of transforming the Labour Party into a "roughly adequate" instrument for working class power. They aimed at 'destabilising it' as an instrument of the bosses within the workers' movement and getting it to form a workers' government. This perspective peaked with Benn's deputy leadership campaign in late summer, 1981. Benn deserted them at Bishops Cleeve in early 1982. This was inevitable from someone who never disguised his loyalty to reformism, but it left his "revolutionary" foot soldiers high and dry. Since then it has been downhill all the way. Now John McIlroy, apparently *Socialist Organiser's* major ideologue mutters in a crest fallen way, "We have to accept that Neil Kinnock came in as leader with tremendous support. We have to accept that the constituencies, albeit through war weariness, gave him 91.5% of the vote.... The irritations of 1974-79 were in the past. Anything was better than the Tories. The left was a liability that hadn't delivered the goods.... The hard left is in no shape for major initiatives. The openings of four years ago no longer exist. There is some demoralisation. We need to rethink and regroup." (SO 181)

PATHEtic

What a pathetic confession of bankruptcy! The 'hard left' turned out to be as soft as a blancmange when faced with its first election. When left reformism, Benn's included, faced the first serious challenge 'shut up or no Labour government' it shut up. Better an old style Labour government than none. This open secret of the Labour left's impotence, which the SO Trotskyists had first covered up and then forgotten themselves, took them by surprise. Their 'hard left' allies melted into the ranks of Labour loyalists and turned on them accusing them of wanting to carry on a damaging civil war in the Party. Yet it is too late for *Socialist Organiser* to abandon its quack schemes for transforming Labour. McIlroy lamely concludes, "We shall, through doing all this ('exploring how to go beyond Labour's inadequate existing programme' and 'standing with our class in their struggles') fraternally and constructively, eventually destabilise the hold the centre right now have on the Labour Party and win it for Socialism" (SO 181)

But the working class does not need a 'destabilised' Labour Party. Nor can it be 'won for socialism' in any form that would leave it recognisable as today's Labour Party. Revolutionary Communism is at odds with Benn and Kinnock's firmly held parliamentary reformist beliefs. Bennite moral socialism, reeking of religiosity, of peaceful parliamentarism is a stage only to further defeats for the working class. Bennery is not something that clears the head and sharpens the reflexes for a fight with the most wily and ruthless ruling class in Europe. It is just a new brand of reformist dope to prevent workers in struggle 'losing faith in democracy' to the point where they form a different kind of party to Benn's Broad Church.

The working class needs neither Broad churches nor narrow sects that claim to be parties. It needs a party that is rooted in its most militant sections, that can participate in and win leadership of its struggles. It needs a party that not only unites in an organisational form the most dedicated and militant fighters of and for the working class, but also that arms them with a programme for working class power.

This programme must be a coherent strategy for linking the recurring sectional struggles of the working class against the misery of life under capitalism, against the attacks of the bosses and their state forces, to an all out offensive to end the system altogether. As such it must seek to clarify the goal of working class power in these recurring fights. It must politicise them, not in the sense of diverting them into electoral shadow boxing but by exposing and organising to combat the centralised force at the bosses disposal, the capitalist state, the final guarantor of their enormous economic power. It must show that this state is at bottom special bodies of armed men.

The present miners strike has revealed this fact starkly to thousands of miners. Benn and Co want to cover up this fact by suggesting there is something illegitimate or abnormal about the police mobilisations in this strike. Not at all. What is revealed is the resources a bosses' government can use whilst maintaining parliamentary democracy and the rule of law.

When these aspects of 'capitalist democracy' are unable to stop effective picketing and contain workers' struggles, another aspect of 'capitalist democracy' naked force, is wheeled out. What Benn and Kinnock try to conceal from workers is that 'capitalist democracy' is in reality democracy for capitalists. It is a democracy that allows them to arrest thousands of pickets and bash the heads of of thousands more. No amount of clever phrases in a Commons debate will alter this.

MOTIVE FORCE

The working class will resist the bosses' repeated attacks, despite the preachings of the Kinnocks and Benns on the sanctity of the law, the rights of elected governments and the duty to go no further than a moral protest. Benn's two deities, Democracy and Morality cannot hold back the elemental class struggle of which the miners' strike is a great example. This struggle is not a strategy or a conspiracy. It is a motive force of human history and society. What the reformists can do, what they have done, often with tragic consequences, is to blinker the working class to the true situation under capitalism and trip it up, hold it back in its life and death struggles. If the working class does not combine its forces at the right moment then it may be divided and beaten. When it has thrown the ruling class into confusion it may not press home its advantage to victory. Certainly it never has and never can deprive the ruling class of its state forces by parliamentary means. The ban that Benn and Co put on the 'use of industrial muscle for political ends' ties our hands at the crucial moment and allows the ruling class to recover everytime it is knocked to the ground.

The miners in this long and gruelling struggle and other working class militants need to find their way to a politics which will not fritter away the victory they win. In 1974 NUM militants trusted, if not Wilson and Callaghan, then Foot and Benn to safeguard their jobs, their wages, their union rights, their social services. They entrusted them to the wrong hands.

In 1984 the miners and the other sections of the working class who struggle alongside them need to take their political future into their own hands. For politics is not a separate thing from the industrial struggle. It is its culmination and conclusion. It is the only battlefield on which decisive victory will be won.

In the early 1920s militant miners took a leading part in founding a revolutionary communist party pledged to working class power. Sixty years and five Labour governments on they must do so again, and this time they can and must succeed. ■



SCARGILL VERSUS THE BROAD LEFT?

THE LAST TWO weeks of the miners' strike have revealed serious differences of opinion in the left-wing of the NUM Executive. The Broad Left is trying to keep these divisions concealed, but the manoeuvrings around the period of talks with the NCB have proved that they exist.

On one side is what the *Financial Times* have described as the "McGahey/Heathfield axis". This consists of Euro-communist elements in the CP, like McGahey, and left Labourites like Heathfield and Emlyn Williams. On the other side is Arthur Scargill, at the moment being supported by the Kent Executive members. Sections of the bosses, the media and the NCB are looking for a climbdown from the NUM on the no closure/no job losses pledge. In return for a delay of execution which the McGahey/Heathfield wing could tout as a victory they would get the principle of voluntary redundancies and closure of unprofitable pits accepted.

The McGahey/Heathfield axis are, far more concerned than Arthur Scargill to get a speedy settlement of the strike. McGahey declared himself to be "desperately anxious to see an early resolution of the dispute." This desperation means he is willing to consider negotiating a deal that falls short of the miners' full demands. As the dispute has gone on so the soft-left axis have more and more considered a compromise option. After the second round of talks with the NCB one un-named Executive member told "the press," "I have noticed that some of those who have been talking about going for broke have stopped doing so." (*Daily Telegraph* 1.6.84)

This unwillingness "to go for broke" resulted in pressure for secret talks with the NCB. McGahey and Heathfield believe that, within the NCB there are decent people (ex NUM members indeed) who can be reasoned with. Their tactic in negotiations is to try and win these elements (people like James Cowan and Ned Smith) into breaking from MacGregor's intransigent position.

This explains why, at the first sniff of compromise from the NCB, they were expressing their optimism to the media about the outcome of the talks. Heathfield regarded the second meeting as one "of what I imagine to be a whole series of meetings". He went on, "I think the Coal Board were less dogmatic than they have been in the past."

What McGahey and Heathfield do not realise is that regardless of whether or not James Cowan is a decent bloke, he

is a paid servant of the Tory government, is completely under MacGregor's orders who in turn takes his direct from Downing Street.

They are all entrusted with managing a (state) capitalist enterprise on a profitable basis. A manager may be as nice as you like but he is on the other side! They want to close unprofitable pits, the miners do not. Heathfield and his friends do not understand this. They think the NCB - the board of a nationalised industry represents the nation. They think that it is clever tactics to seek collaboration with the "decent" elements in management or in the capitalist class. To do this of course concessions have to be made. This is a disastrous road for miners to follow. It means Heathfield and McGahey are not fighting for total victory. This has dire practical consequences, because Thatcher and MacGregor are!

When it looked as though the talks were progressing these left leaders moved to sabotage mass action in the strike. McGahey had already granted dispensation to Ravenscraig Steelworks which undermined mass picketing and allowed almost full production to continue. Emlyn Williams struck a similar settlement deal with his ISTC friends at Llanwern. Indeed when Scargill called for an end to such deals and the resumption of picketing Williams publicly condemned him declaring, "I run South Wales and no one else". This bureaucratic outburst is not only aimed at Scargill. It is a warning to Welsh rank and file militants to leave the running of the strike in the hands of the officials. It also stresses how far short of a centralised national struggle this is and how little control and co-ordination the big area barons like Taylor, Williams and McGahey are willing to allow Scargill and the national office.

The most dramatic example of the dangers that flowed from the soft-left's strategy of "fruitful talks" was Orgreave. Here was a coking plant from which 35 lorries, twice a day, were supplying Scunthorpe steelworks with enough scab coke to keep it going at virtually full production. To counter this Scargill called for mass picketing. Despite initially getting a mass picket there the 'left' bureaucrats in Yorkshire - Taylor, Briscoe and Thompson - effectively torpedoed the struggle. First they used their monopoly of control over picketing to divert miners away from Orgreave. On receiving their orders in a sealed envelope at 4 am,

miners who thought they were going to Orgreave found themselves being scattered all over Nottinghamshire. Then, despite Scargill's call at the 7th June London demonstration for a further mass picket, Taylor and the Strike Committee in Yorkshire called off picketing at Orgreave altogether. A Yorkshire Executive member quoted in *Socialist Worker* argued, "Scargill was out of step shouting for mass picket we can't deliver"

This is nonsense. There were plenty of willing pickets and the union still has the funds to mobilise them. The real reason for their opposition was that the battle of Orgreave was souring the atmosphere in the lead up to the talks with the NCB. Taylor and Co were prepared to lose the battle of Orgreave for the sake of maintaining a friendly atmosphere with the NCB job-butcherers. Of course talks with the employers during any trade union dispute, cannot be ruled out. However any drawn out negotiations, especially secret ones obviously have a bad effect on morale. What is totally wrong is to demoralise the effective action of the strike for the sake of the talks as McGahey, Heathfield, Taylor and Williams did.

What of Arthur Scargill's position? The screen of secrecy that surrounds the Executive has meant these important, perhaps vital differences with his fellow Broad lefters have never been taken to the members. Yet, the *Financial Times* after interviewing Scargill, argues, "fellow left-wingers, with a greater desire for negotiated settlement than Mr Scargill may exert pressure for a deal sooner or later." (16.6.84) In the same paper the day before, Scargill, in a cryptic phrase, hinted that one day he might find himself standing alone, "If I am the last person rejecting the closure plan, then that will be my position."

It is clear from his every utterance that Scargill wants total victory on the closure plan. He wants MacGregor out and Thatcher too if the rest of the union movement came out alongside the miners. But he doesn't dare to put this fairly and squarely to the rank and file. He does not dare appeal directly to them. If he did he would say, beware the compromisers. Organise yourselves at a pithead level - elect strike committees in every area, centralise the direction of the strike in an elected national strike committee. I will be answerable to such a committee and so should all the other officials. Failure to do so could either lead him to succumb to the pressure of the soft-



JUST OVER A week ago two miners from Keresley and Doll Mill pits near Coventry visited France to win solidarity with the strike and collect money. They were able to explain the details of the strike, first hand, to French workers. The trip, arranged by Workers Power, was a marked success.

The fete organised by the French left-wing group, Lutte Ouvriere, is an annual forum for political debate amongst socialists from all over the world. Along with a stall for the miners we set up stalls for the Movement for a Revolutionary Communist International (which consists of Workers Power, the Irish Workers Group, the German Gruppe Arbeitermacht and the French Pouvoir Ouvrier). Although actual collections were forbidden at the fete, the miners' stall sold a large number of badges and posters and raised over £200 for the strike fund. A meeting called by Workers Power, on the miners' dispute was attended by over 100 people. One of the miners spoke at this meeting. Contacts were established with French militants at the fete and collections for the strike were promised at factories in Rouen and Amneville.

After the fete Workers Power and Pouvoir Ouvrier organised a visit to the French coalfield in Lorraine. At the end of April militants from two pits in Forbach (Lorraine) has passed resolutions supporting the British miners' strike (see WP56). One miner from Doll Mill came along and was able to talk to these miners in person. A display was well-received and an effective collection organised. Help in this was received from a French socialist grouping Politique Ouvriere. They also organised a public meeting attended by over 50 people, including 10 miners and a striking steelworker from Germany. The meeting was addressed by the British miner and followed up with another collection, in which £50 was raised.

The final stage of the trip was a visit to the major steel plant, and scene of many militant strikes - at Longwy. This is currently under threat of thousands of redundancies as part of Mitterrand's austerity plan. We gave out many leaflets on the miners' strike and collected more money.

Altogether we collected over £400 in France and gave out some 3000 leaflets, in French, explaining the miners case. The message of international solidarity, the need for the blacking of all coal to Britain and for more fund raising for the miners' strike was raised by a British rank and file miner with French rank and file miners. □

left conciliators, or he could end up in glorious but powerless isolation. Over Orgreave, for example, he obviously quarrelled with Taylor but could do nothing. Why would Scargill not call on miners to defy their regional official leaders when those leaders were sabotaging the action?

Scargill and his supporters would reply that such a move would be divisive. To expose such division would be to undermine unity and give the bosses' a field day. Not so. The Unity of the lowest common denominator is the unity of the graveyard. In a strike such unity means defeat. Real unity is a united fight against the enemy. It does not mean that differences of opinion and position need to be hushed up. Unity in action even at the price of a bust up with Taylor would have been better than defeat at Orgreave. It could have meant shutting Orgreave. Such a blow to the bosses would more than compensate for any short-lived joy they may have got from the fact that Scargill and Taylor disagreed. Besides, they already know such division exist. (See picture) Only the rank and file are being kept in the dark by Arthur Scargill's silence.

His position that he is the servant of the union is fine if it means he is the servant of the membership. On the other hand if it means that he is the slave of the majority of the Executive Executive when they go for a sell out this will be a disaster precisely because of the enormous respect he commands. If he will not openly criticise them now what guarantee is there that he will when a shoddy deal is on the table. This should not be left to the moral integrity of one man, even Arthur Scargill. Democratic rank and file control is essential.

MacGregor's orders from Thatcher that no deal was to be made have scuppered the talks for the time being. This has had the effect of enraging the NUM leaders. The divisions that were growing apace have now been healed. As the strike goes on they will surely open up again. The lesson of the last two weeks is that the NUM Broad left cracks under pressure and neither wing will base themselves on the rank and file. The urgent task of militants in the next four weeks is to organise a rank and file movement. Amongst the striking minorities - who are receiving little

or no official help - this is desperately necessary. A conference of militant striking miners would become a springboard for smashing the right in the area and spreading the strike. Other areas must follow suit. The control and direction of picketing must be taken out of the hands of the Taylors and Williams and put into the hands of strike committees elected from mass meetings if picketing is to be effective.* The strategy of the strike must be regularly discussed at such meetings. The majority of striking miners are not picketing. Only about 20,000-30,000 are regularly involved in picketing. Others must be drawn in, or into other aspects of organising the strike - addressing meetings, touring factories and so on. Rank and file self-reliance must be built to counter passivity and the belief that Arthur Scargill is sufficient to stop a sell-out.

He must be called upon now to support the building of a militant miners' rank and file movement. If a deal does emerge in the next few weeks or if talks are resumed we must fight to make sure that the rank and file are kept completely informed and that they alone take the final decision.

The secrecy of the negotiations must be ended. Reports direct to the strikers must be made. If the Executive goes for a settlement it must be forced to call for a delegate conference before any recommendation is put to the members let alone accepted. If there are different opinions on the Executive they should be openly expressed in *The Miner*. The details of the settlement should be printed in full. But even a national delegate conference should only recommend. The striking miners, each and every one, should alone decide. Fourteen weeks of hardship and sacrifice cry out for that right. Mass meetings of the strikers of every pit should decide after having heard all views for and against. Those who have scabbed on the strike should have no part in any decision.

This is the only certain way to ensure that all these weeks of struggle win total victory. If Arthur Scargill does not want to find himself "the last person left rejecting the closure plan" he should fight for such measures now. But whether he does or not rank and file militants should do so - with the greatest urgency. ■

WHERE THE TWO SIDES STAND

SCARGILL

- Withdrawal of pit closure programme; no mines to shut unless exhausted.
- Development of 40 million tons of new capacity; new investment for every pit in Britain.
- A substantial wage rise to reverse pay deterioration of the past nine years.
- No redundancies at all.
- A four-day working week and early retirement for miners at 55.
- Reaffirmation of the Plan for Coal.

MacGREGOR

- A phased reduction of 4 million tons of excess capacity through the closure of uneconomic pits; around 20 mines and 20,000 jobs to go over the next year or so.
- Continuation of the investment programme, costing £2 million a day in development of new capacity.
- A 5.2 per cent pay rise on basic rates (3.3 per cent on earnings) and an improvement in the pay incentive scheme.
- No compulsory redundancies but massive severance payments to attract miners to leave the industry voluntarily.
- A new Plan for Coal, with a big marketing drive to increase customers at home and abroad, with the hope of expanding coal production after 1985.

SIX MEN CRUCIAL TO PEACE

PETER HEATHFIELD
Elected general secretary of the NUM just before the present crisis. Open and friendly stalwart of broad Left, seen by some NCB officials as the leader they could negotiate with. Has kept in line with the Scargill approach, with odd hints of a willingness to compromise.

MICK MCGAHEY
Vice-president of the union since 1971, President of the Scottish Miners, and a prominent figure in the British Communist Party. Shares most of Scargill's ideas but is believed to be more pragmatic and willing to compromise in a crisis. Less prominent than in 1972 and 1974.

JACK TAYLOR
Scargill's successor as Yorkshire president. Also on broad left without Scargill's charisma. Has been criticised by far Left for cautious strategy over flying pickets. Candid, amiable, and realistic about obstacles facing union. Has said strike could not be won without Notts miners.

NED SMITH
NCB industrial relations director. Has a reputation for being Board chief dove. Has bent over backward to accommodate the union negotiators but has made little impression. Has advised a low-key approach and more than once talked MacGregor out of actions that might harden attitudes.

JAMES COWAN
NCB deputy chairman, works closely with MacGregor but is also well respected by many NUM leaders. Enjoys friendship with McGahey. Shares MacGregor's objectives but is privately upset by his handling of the strike and anguished at what is happening.

GEORGE HAYES
Yorkshire area director, widely regarded as the man who started pit strike by closing down Cortonwood with only five weeks notice. Bluff and well liked, worked amicably with Scargill as area president, but made a big mistake in rushing Cortonwood closure.

The Observer (17.6.84) looking for compromisers

THE BRITISH ROAD-

THE STRUGGLE OVER the *Morning Star* is just the surface eruption of a deep internal malady that has wracked the CP for many years. The "Forward march of the CP" was halted in the late forties and early fifties when the party had some 47,000 members. It suffered a sharp crisis in 1956 when it slavishly supported the crushing of the Hungarian workers and lost upwards of ten thousand members. Thereafter it suffered a slow decline and ageing process.

In the 1970s and early 80s - the sharpest period of class struggle since the 1920s, the CP's chronic decline became critical. At the start of the 70s their membership stood at around 30,000. Today it is barely 11,000. The YCL was 1,000 strong in 1981. Despite the last few years, in which youth unemployment has soared and youth have rebelled, the YCL has slumped to 447 members. Clearly this is a party that does not thrive on struggle. Quite the reverse, class battles like the present miners' strike intensify its death agony.

The CP is reduced to measuring "success" in terms of how much they can slow down the rate of decline. The national organiser, Ian McKay wrote last September that membership was down 2,500 on the July 1981 figure but was cheered because: "The most heartening aspect of Party membership over the past period is the increased rate of recruitment."

The same doublethink applies to the circulation figures for the *Morning Star*. The paper sold only 15,000 copies in Britain at the beginning of 1983. This prompted the CP to launch a campaign to win 3,000 new readers. The campaign was a miserable flop, but McLennan took heart from the fact that, as with membership figures, the rate of decline was slowing down - he announced: "We thank all party organisations and comrades whose work was mainly responsible for slowing down the rate of decline."

In every sphere of its work the Communist Party's influence is shrinking. This stark truth,

impinging as it does on the consciousness of even the most purblind St. John Street bureaucrat, is the backcloth to the bitter feuding going on today. Both sides in the conflict insist that their schemes and perspectives offer an escape route from decline. It is clear however, that neither side has come near to breaking from the bankrupt policies of Stalinism. In fact, Tony Chater and his bitter foe Martin Jacques, the editor of *Marxism Today* - the party's one "success story" - have more in common than they think.

The dominant faction in the CP is a coalition of rampant "Euro-Communists" - Jacques, Dave Cook, Tricia Davis - and a network of party bureaucrats who have no alternative to supporting the Euro's ideas. This crew project their own bankruptcy onto the working class as a whole. They argue that the isolation they suffer is only a reflection of the isolation and decline of the entire organised working class movement. Basing themselves on the ideas of Eric Hobsbawm they argue that the working population has changed beyond recognition, while the labour movement has remained stuck in a traditionalist, blue collar rut. With one flick of the pen the faddish Jacques writes off the momentous struggles and achievements of the working class over the last thirty years: "Since the early 50s the labour movement has been in decline." (*Focus*, November 1983). This is the bureaucrat's and (failed) parliamentarian's eye view.

Jacques, along with Hobsbawm and the other propagators of "Labour's lost millions", see this decline in exclusively electoral terms. Class struggle does not get a look in. Moreover no one is to blame for this apart from the rank and file of the labour movement itself. The task for the CP and the labour movement is to reverse this decline by breaking out of a self-imposed isolation. According to this view the 10 million strong labour movement is isolated from the "social movements". What are these? Why the feminists, (numbered in a few tens of thousands at the most optimistic assessment) and the millions - so dear to the hearts of the *Marxism Today* editors - who voted for the Alliance at the last election.

The Euros' strategy for overcoming this isolation is the politics of alliances. Thatcherism, according to *Marxism Today* and its pontificating academics who doubtless know how to make anti-Thatcherite alliances in their Senior Common Rooms, is a wholly new phenomenon analogous, in some respects, to fascism. To combat it a bold extension of the politics of alliances is necessary. An "anti-Thatcher" majority must be built, including in its ranks even Tory wets. Leading Euro Dave Cook is the chief exponent of this strategy: "But if the Left is to build such a political majority it will need to come to terms with, rather than dismiss, the crucial anti-Tory segment of the electorate...The key strategic problem now facing socialists is how to build a political majority that includes part of the centre but is under the leadership of the Left." (*Marxism Today*, Feb. 1983).

To achieve this goal *Marxism Today* has opened its pages to liberals like Michael Meadowcroft, police chiefs and anti-union journalists like Peter Jenkins of the *Guardian*. Of course this anti-Thatcher alliance is not for struggle against Thatcher. Any real life battle like the miners' strike would find the prize catches of this "People's Front" neutral or hostile to those under attack. How can one expect liberal businessmen or high Tory Churchmen to support picketing miners or striking health workers? Break the law? Defy the police? Never!

In fact this alliance is designed for only one day in five years - polling day. In reality either this alliance, and the need to preserve it at all costs, would result in suppressing every real element of resistance to Thatcher in the here and now or it would be blown apart at the first serious struggle.

The CP has demonstrated the rotten nature of this policy on a small scale in the struggles of the last five years. On the two "People's Marches" (NB People's not Workers') the CP tried to suppress every class demand and even every expression of anger against the Tories! Anti-Tory slogans were banned by brute force. CP stewards like Pete Lenahan imposed the "class peace" line with their fists! Here we see graphically the two sides of Stalinism. Class collaboration and cringing to the representatives of the bosses, progressive businessmen, Tory wets, Bishops and actresses - on the one hand - and a cynical contempt for working class democracy and a willingness to use thuggery to keep their hold, on the other. The "People's Marches" were run like the "Peoples' Democracies" of Eastern Europe. No wonder the marchers nicknamed them "Gulags on the road."

The political rationale for this was amply explained by Dave le Peuple in *Focus*: "As Communists (sic) we don't see the march in the blinkered terms of a simple anti-Tory campaign...Working class Tory voters to Bishops and other people who are concerned about unemployment, these are the people who must be won."

The politics of alliances leads directly to the betrayal of the working class' vital interests. In the interests of their hoped-for alliance with the centre the Euros have repeatedly whitewashed the police. Instead of opposing these paid oppressors of workers, youth and gays, they have repeatedly argued for a closer integration of the police into the communities. As Dave Cook put it, the CPGB wanted "far fewer pandas prowling and far more home beat policing." Tell that to the striking miners of the Notts pit villages!

In fact the police are a weapon in the hands of the bosses and whoever their government happens to be. No "alliance" with people who support the police is possible. The police, on miners' picket lines today, are showing what they are really paid for - to smash up and arrest pickets. Two miners are dead as a result of police protection of scabs. They exist to enforce the bosses' law and order.

The fact that the Euros repeatedly gloss over this fact, or at their most left, suggest that progressive police committees can curb these excesses, places them in direct opposition to the independent interests and struggles of the workers.

At a society-wide level this strategy leads straight back to the Popular Front of the 1930s. Indeed Jacques, Hobsbawm and Co consciously hark back to this disastrous strategy. Comparing Thatcherism to fascism Jacques argued: "Comrades, in the 1930s when the communist movement was presented with a new kind of rightism, the communist movement and any sensible German worth his salt was seeking to come to terms with fascism and to develop the strategy of the Popular Front." (Quoted in *Behind the Crisis in British Stalinism* - Alex Mitchell, pp.75-6.)

The Popular Front in Spain led to a bloc between communists, socialists and bourgeois republicans. In the name of that bloc the Communists slaughtered workers in Barcelona who rose against the bosses. More recently in Chile the popular front (Unidad Popular) in 1973 did all in its power to pacify the bourgeoisie, including leaving the workers unarmed, only to be met with Pinochet's bloody coup. In aiming to update and "re-



PPPS punch-up: Stalinists see stars



Gordon McLennan



Tony Chater

After last year's general election Gordon McLennan, the general secretary to the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) thanked the party for its "exceptional effort" and "splendid activity". This official optimism was in marked contrast to the open civil war that was then tearing the CPGB to shreds. A hint of the true picture inside Britain's shrunken Stalinist party was painted by Steve Howell in the September 1983 issue of the party's newsletter *Focus*: "Few can deny that our party is in disarray."

The focus of the public brawling between the factions of a party once noted for its discipline and secrecy is who should control the *Morning Star*. A strange question most people would think since they would have assumed it was the paper of the Communist Party. Yet the paper is formally owned by the People's Press Printing Society (PPPS). Until last year this was merely a CP front set up to raise capital for the *Daily Worker* (precursor of the *Morning Star*) after the war. In 1983, however, a dispute between the editor of the *Star*, Tony Chater, and the CP leadership, led to an open split between the PPPS and the CP. Chater used the "independence" of the PPPS to reject CP directives. The CP was described in the paper as "an outside body" and the PPPS annual shareholders' meeting saw the CP leadership outflanked by Chater, his deputy Whitfield and the former CP industrial organiser, Mick Costello. By packing the meeting they staged a coup in which they secured control of the PPPS management committee for themselves. They made clear that they would not be tied to CP Executive Committee decisions, despite the fact that they were members of the EC.

The Communist Party leadership, Gordon McLennan and his cohorts, organised a counter-attack. They set out at the November 1983 Congress of the CPGB (the 38th in its 63 year old history) to recapture the *Morning Star* and oust Chater and Whitfield. George Bolton (Scottish NUM Vice-President) led the attack for the EC and warned Chater and his friends: "There is no one who can sit on the Communist Party Executive representing someone else."

The end result was the triumph of the leadership's list by 155 votes to 92, the election of thirteen new members to the Executive and the dum-

ping of the Chater-Costello faction.

So far so good for the leadership. The bad old tradition of "bureaucratic centralism" (misnamed democratic centralism) had triumphed. In the early 1920s the Stalinised CPs adopted a ban on factions, a leadership recommended list system and a winner takes all representation that disenfranchised even tame minorities and expelled principled oppositionists. Yet now the party that liked to boast of its monolithic "unity" was completely unable to impose its discipline over the Chater faction. For the first time ever the *Morning Star* had an editor who was not in, indeed was in open defiance of, the CP leadership.

Following this victory the new EC set out to get the PPPS back under its control. The April/May 1984 *Focus* carried a front page headline calling on members to "Help the Party Save our Paper" - the campaign consisted of frenziedly getting members to take out shares in the PPPS and so pack the forthcoming regional annual general meetings. For their part the Chaterites launched a costly "survival plan". This involved buying new machinery, turning William Rust House into a print shop for union journals as well as the *Star* and turning the *Star* into a tabloid. It also involved appeals to prominent Labour MPs and union leaders to help turn the *Star* into an "independent paper of the movement."

The various AGMs revealed that the battle for control of the *Star* was as vicious as ever. In Glasgow the meeting was abandoned after 44 minutes because the chair refused to take a CP resolution calling for the sacking of Chater and Whitfield. In the ensuing fracas one CP member received a fractured jaw! The result of this was to disenfranchise six hundred Scottish shareholders. The end result of this unseemly saga was that the final 2,000 strong AGM on June 10th 1984 voted to accept the "survival plan", keep Chater and Whitfield as editors and give them a 4-2 majority on the PPPS management committee. The Chaterites greeted this narrow victory by calling for "amicable relations" to be restored with the CP but on the basis of the party now recognising the *Morning Star's* "independence". The party is unlikely to take this lying down since its margin of defeat was achieved by excluding its Scottish supporters. The war goes on. ■



Nick Oakes (IFL)

The Popular Front on the march - A long and winding road away from socialism

BLOCK TO SOCIALISM



Euros court cops — Chater whitewashes Judas Kinnoek

live" this strategy to fight Thatcher, Jacques and Cook's alliances may not be so grand but, as their behaviour on the People's March shows, they can have an immediately pernicious effect on working class struggle.

The political illiterates of Fleet Street have cast Tony Chater and Mick Costello in the role of "hardliners" and Muscovites, resisting the forward march of Eurocommunism. This is nonsense. It is also inaccurate to paint them up as a "trade union" opposition to the Euros/McLennan bloc. Just like the Euros Chater and Co harp on about party's isolation, but the isolation they fearolation from the main phalanx of the trade union bureaucracy - especially as it has turned to the right. Their particular scheme for overcoming it is to surreptitiously turn the *Morning Star* into a broad "Labour Movement" paper. In practice this is to make it a mouth piece for the General Secretaries of the major unions. This explains why they have been busy loosening its ties with the Communist Party. As one of Chater's allies, the Labour MP Ernie Roberts put it: "I shall fight very hard to keep the paper within the control of its readership and to maintain a point of view reflecting the labour and trade union movement other than let it become a partisan party political organ of the Communist Party."

This is a real cheek. Without the CP the boring *Morning Star* would never find a readership. Roberts should ask why the much bigger Labour Party has no daily paper before he starts pontificating on keeping the *Morning Star* non-partisan.

Clearly Chater wants to do a deal with union bureaucrats and the likes of Roberts in order to make the *Star* a broad paper. This explains why it is a number of union leaders like Ken Gill, Ken Brett and George Guy who are backing Chater.

I want a paper that their friends in the bureaucracy - like Buckton, Knapp and Sapper - could identify with, without thereby being branded as Communists.

In fact this is a modified - ie. even more bureaucratic - version of the Broad Left strategy pioneered by the CP in the 60s and 70s.

This strategy insisted on building left caucuses inside the trade union with the job of getting left officials elected. Indeed it substituted electoral activity for the building of independent rank and file organisation. The fruits of this were most clear in the AUEW. The Broad Left brought Hugh Scanlon to office. Yet it had no control over him and no rank and file organisation. Indeed it demobilised the forces it had mustered once the union was in "safe hands". When Scanlon turned on his base and became an architect of the wage-cutting social contract under Labour, the Broad Left were incapable of separating themselves from him. His betrayals were not resisted and demoralisation and decay set in. The final act was the routing of the Broad Left by Boyd and Duffy - a set back from which the union is yet to recover.

Chater and Costello want a paper peddling a re-run of this bureaucratic strategy. In addition they want it to glorify the ruling bureaucracy in the USSR and Eastern Europe. This task is performed with reports of bumper cereal crops in Bulgaria and plan fulfillment in the USSR.

The Labour Movement has no need for a part-Stalinised, part-Left-Labour bureaucratic broadsheet. The open and democratic Labour Movement daily it needs is not on offer from Chater.

Both wings of the CPGB are pushing for alliances not for an independent working class strategy. One wing tailors to the Labour bureaucracy, one to the restless trends of the middle class left. Yet both are united by their *Stalinism* as encapsulated in the CP programme *The British Road to Socialism* (revised in 1977). The two cornerstones of this programme are that a peaceful parliamentary road to socialism can be achieved and that the means for doing this are to be found in the construction of a Broad Democratic Alliance. The alliance - whatever emphasis it is given - is between "the working class and (these) sections of the capitalist class." In a phrase, class collaboration. Both sides share a class collaborationist perspective.

At the moment both sides remain Stalinist in that they maintain a loyalty, not shared by Labourites, to the bureaucracy that has seized political power from the working class in the USSR. The Euros, despite their criticisms of the lack of liberal democracy in the USSR, still regard it as some sort of socialist country in advance of capitalism. Chater, hoping for the Moscow franchise (and cash) is increasingly sycophantic about the Kremlin. The *British Road to Socialism* is possible because "existing socialism" has tipped the balance in favour of a peaceful struggle in Britain. This outlook is rooted in Stalinism and its nationalist reformist perspective.

The Broad Democratic Alliance, like all class collaboration, is an obstacle to effective class unity in action. The peaceful road to socialism is a deception. If the miners can't defend their jobs peacefully without being charged by cavalry does anyone seriously imagine Britain's bosses would part with state power "peacefully". For worker militants seeking a revolutionary answer to today's crisis neither side in the CPGB conflict offers an alternative. The nature of the *Morning Star* will not change, whoever controls it.

Now, in its death throes, a determined struggle against *Stalinism* can win, from the ranks of the CPGB, elements who are committed to the working class and its struggles. To them we say, leave Chater to the union bureaucrats and Jacques to the academic poseurs he is so fond of. Join the ranks of revolutionary Trotskyism. ■

by Mark Hoskisson



THE COMMUNIST PARTY AND THE MINERS STRIKE

The CPGB is a fading force in the trade unions. Its "rank and file" organisation, the Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions, has all but disappeared. From being a focus of active opposition to Heath's anti-union laws, it has become a virtually invisible organisation. It was not even mentioned in the Party's trade union resolution at the last Congress. Its last conference lasted a short morning and ended at lunchtime because the handful of vetted delegates had nothing to say or do!

Within the trade union bureaucracy, however, the CPGB still has a few remaining representatives. The most important of these are in the NUM. Mick McGahey is Vice-President of the NUM, while in Scotland and Kent CP figures dominate the official union machine.

The record of these leaders is a rotten one. Prior to the present miners' strike McGahey and his Scottish lieutenant George Bolton were guilty of betraying the struggles against closure at Kinneil and Polmaise (though the fight at the latter has become part of the present strike).

In the case of Kinneil in 1982 McGahey refused to spread action in support of the threatened pit. Then he turned round and blamed miners for "not responding to the call" to support Kinneil. This was not surprising. No clear call to strike had ever been made. It was betrayals like this that caused difficulties in getting a solid Scottish strike at the beginning of the present dispute.

In the present dispute McGahey has undoubtedly played a role in trying to bureaucratically limit and control mass picketing. This flows from his whole perspective of substituting bureaucratic "alliances" for rank and file action. Thus at Ravenscraig he was desperate to call the mass picketing of the steel plant off. His method of doing this was by concluding a deal with his ISTC opposite numbers which, as we now know, allowed steel production to continue and thereby undermine the effectiveness of the strike. Militant miners will ask themselves why they risked arrest during several days of mass picketing if McGahey was willing to sell them well short in order to keep the ISTC bureaucrats happy.

"POSTURINGS"

McGahey's role during the battle of Orgreave was also a sign of his fear and distrust of the rank and file. Clearly the Orgreave mass picketing was threatening the attempts at negotiations with the NCB that McGahey, Heathfield and their Broad Left allies on the NUM were seeking to make a go of. It is no accident that while a battle was raging at Orgreave, McGahey and Heathfield (not in the CP but clearly influenced by them) were talking of the "optimism" the talks had given them. Their alternative action consisted of the call for a "people's lobby of Parliament" (McGahey).

In the interests of their "alliance" with what they see as progressive sections of the NCB management, these gentlemen were prepared to negotiate a compromise. This strategy led McGahey to denounce "posturings on the Orgreave picket line". Clearly an attack on Scargill, who was more suspicious of the NCB offers of talks, and the young miners at Orgreave trying to make their strike effective. It was a betrayal of them and an insult to their courage, faced as they were by a militarised and brutal police force.

McGahey's attack was enough to ensure that his friends in the Stalinist dominated Sheffield labour movement stood by while the Orgreave pickets were beaten and bludgeoned by police. True the Sheffield Trades Council called for a mass picket on Wednesday June 6th. But there was no D-Day invasion by the Sheffield Labour movement. The Stalinist machine issued no propaganda at all. Militants were left to hear about the call from radio reports and a Workers Power leaflet that was distributed at engineering factories.

CLASS COLLABORATION

In the key CP-led factories - Shardlows and Davy McKee's - no attempt was made to get engineers to the picket line. Apart from miners the only other union banner present was an ASTMS doctor's branch one. Clearly the CP made no serious attempt to mobilise for the picket either inside or outside the NUM. The only national official to be seen on the day was Scargill. Picket line "posturings" were clearly not for McGahey and the like.

These examples of the CP's misleadership flow from their class collaborationist politics. The general policy of "alliances" is translated by McGahey into NUM terms as follows: "I also want to make clear that I'm for building the broadest possible alliance of anti-Thatcher forces to save the coal industry." (*Focus*, Nov. 1983)

This alliance includes the management, the "progressive" elements of the NCB. The CP argue openly for collaboration between the NCB and

the NUM in order to avoid strikes.

In *Marxism Today* an article by Graham Gudgin talks of the strike not as a fight against unemployment but as a means of making sure that "at least the costs of unemployment should be borne equitably." How a miner on the dole and MacGregor are to share these costs "equitably" is not explained. In addition this article argues for a return to the halcyon days of the 50s and 60s when co-operation led to: "planning for economic change, which typified the first three post-war decades, which obviated the need for the type of strike we are now witnessing."

In fact this collaboration and planning meant that the number of miners was cut from 700,000 in the 1950s to 250,000 by 1974. The reason why there were no national strikes in these years was because the right-wing NUM leaders colluded with the bosses to prevent them. The numerous regional and local strikes were deliberately kept isolated.

This collaborationist policy, which the CP wants to return to, is based on the idea that there is a "national interest" that is more important to defend than our class interests. In today's strike this means not fighting for the independent class interests of the miners, regardless of the needs of the NCB, but fighting to defend "the coal industry as a valuable national asset" as Pete Carter, the CP's industrial organiser puts it. He added that because this is a national rather than a class issue, it should not be developed into a political struggle: "Any projection of the strike as a political strike aimed at bringing down the government will be of no help to the miners - quite the reverse." (Quoted in *The Leninist*).



Bernie Malone

McGahey

Miners do not need this drivel from the Communist Party. They, like their enemy Ian MacGregor, know full well their fight is political. It is a class battle against the Tories. The attempt to paint it otherwise by the CPGB is an attempt to conceal their willingness to compromise with the class enemy. Of course certain CPers like Maurice Jones, Jack Collins and Malcolm Pitt are verbally more intransigent. They tend, in the conflict in the CP, to side with the so-called "hardliners" around the *Morning Star*. Despite this, their politics remain that of bureaucratic alliances. They have not organised their rank and file base into a real fighting movement. They will not break with the bureaucratic rules of the Executive's game. Despite their tactical differences with McGahey, they cannot be relied upon.

The CPGB offers no revolutionary answers for striking miners and other militants. Indeed their whole strategy, premised on wheeling and dealing, trimming and compromising, will lead to defeat. To combat this a real revolutionary communist party must, as a matter of urgency, be built. □

Gandhi's crackdown on Sikhs: the sub-continent fragments

THE STORMING OF the most sacred of Sikh shrines, the Golden Temple of Amritsar, has sent a wave of outrage and indignation through the two million strong Sikh communities abroad and caused several mutinies in the Indian army itself. Punjab, where 52% of the population is Sikh, remains under heavy military occupation.

The excuse given for the army's action was a campaign of terrorism which resulted in hundreds of deaths and which emanated from the followers of the fundamentalist preacher and political leader Jamail Singh Bhindranwale. In fact the decisive factor for Indira Gandhi appears to have been the decision of the major Sikh party - the Akali Dal - under its leader Harchand Singh Longowal to launch an economic campaign, the central factor of which would be the withholding of Punjab's grain. Punjab is the so-called bread basket of India. It is the area where the 'Green Revolution' of intensified agriculture based on high-yield new seeds has greatly increased output and helped fend off the direct threat of full-scale famine.

Bhindranwale, and his followers who fortified the Golden Temple, represented a more 'radical' current than the Akali Dal, the major party of the prosperous Sikh landowners and bourgeoisie. The latter formed the State Government under the short lived Janata coalition government (1977 to 1980). After that government was removed the Akali Dal mounted an increasingly intense campaign for various measures of autonomy for the state. As early as October 1973 the Akali Dal had adopted its "Forty Five Demands". These included an Autonomy Statute for Punjab and the re-drawing of the province's boundaries to include areas where Punjabi is spoken. They included the declaration of Chandigarh to be solely the capital

opponents in various states - a tactic inherited from the British Raj. Gandhi has been forced by the weakening position of her Congress Party and the developing centrifugal forces to resort to Hindu chauvinism to maintain her hold over the central heartlands, and to divide and rule tactics in Southern India, in Assam and Bengal and in Punjab.

Are the Sikhs then an oppressed nationality? Firstly they are not a nationality at all but a religious community. Founded by their first Guru Nanak (1469 - 1539), they developed under 10 years into a religion distinct from both Islam and Hinduism. The gurus rejected the Hindu caste system and preached a monotheistic doctrine. The Golden temple was founded in the last quarter of the sixteenth century and in the next century and a quarter the fundamental features of the religion - including its sacred scriptures (the Granth Sahib) were composed. Its last guru completed Sikhism's development as a warrior community - the Khalsa with its famous outward signs that all Sikhs must wear.

With the collapse of the Moghul Empire and the creeping conquest of India by the British East India Company Sikhism had its brief period of political, state existence, especially under Ranjit Singh (1808-1839) who was Maharajah of the Punjab and many surrounding areas and who created a disciplined western-style army. After his death the Sikh polity underwent crisis and destruction at the hands of the British, who, recognising the value of the Sikhs as a "martial race" made them the backbone of the Indian army for maintaining the Raj. Sikh regiments remained 'loyal' in the Great Mutiny. The Sikhs served the East India Company, and then the King-Emperor as well.

Though the Sikhs have a political history and form a distinct religious community they are not a separate 'race', nor do they have a separate language from their fellow Punjabis. In the Indian Punjab their relations with the Hindus are close and completely intermixed. At village level the main religious differences are likely also to be class ones. Thus in a typical Punjabi village Nihal, 75 miles South-West of Chandigarh the Sikhs play a dominant economic role. "Indeed 80 out of the 150 households of the village are Sikh; and almost all of them are landowners. The rest are Hindus, mainly lower caste and outcaste, who are, with few exceptions landless. In other words, a little over half the families in the community possess all of the 1,700 acres of land belonging to the village with the top ten families owning two fifths of the total. It is families such as these that have been the principal beneficiaries of the Green Revolution." (Inside India Today : Dilip Hiro p10)

Sikhs were never a majority in pre-independence, pre-partition Punjab where they were outnumbered by Hindus and Muslim Punjabi speakers. The bloody partition of 1947, accompanied by a pogrom and civil war in which 200,000 died and five million were made homeless, drove the Muslim and Sikh/Hindu communities apart. In 1966 the Punjab was again divided with the formation of the province of Haryana. This, for the first time gave the Sikhs a majority in the rump of Punjab.

Now the most vociferous Sikh fundamentalists - especially those in the Sikh communities abroad, are calling for the formation of Khalistan (State of the Pure), an independent Sikh state, to include large parts of the surrounding Indian provinces. Such a state would be a reactionary step several times over. It would be a religious not a national state forcing secular Sikhs back into the mediaeval barbarism of compulsory religious observance. Iran, under Khomeini, demonstrates just how reactionary that would be. Furthermore, it would either involve the oppression of a majority of non Sikh citizens - or their being driven out before such a state was founded. It would not be an expression of the democratic national right to self-determination but the creation of an oppressive theocracy.

Yet despite the Congress Party's claims to secularism and to represent Indian national aspirations Indira Gandhi's military occupation of the Punjab and her army's assault on the temple must be condemned. The crisis with the Sikhs is a direct result of her stimulating the growth of both Hindu and Sikh chauvinism. The murders of people of both religions in Punjab and Haryana are in large measure her responsibility. The very brutality of the storming of the Golden Temple is doubtless aimed in part at



Bhindranwale and bodyguard in the grounds of the Golden Temple

pulling her electoral chestnuts out of the fire next year.

The underlying causes of the problem lie deeper than the corrupt and self-seeking bourgeois politicians of the Congress, or their 'alternatives' the National Democratic Alliance and the United Front, the right and left splinters of the Janata coalition of the 1970s. It lies in the failure of the dual strategy of the Indian bourgeois and land-owning class pursued since the 1950s and 1960s. This involved state capitalist industrialisation and the 'Green Revolution'.

The former, whilst it created an industrial infrastructure based on steel production, heavy electrical equipment and transport has failed to hoist India out of the league of underdeveloped countries. Three quarters of the population is still engaged in agriculture. Moreover the share of foreign imperialist investment in India's private capitalist concerns continues to stand at about 50%. The Indian bourgeoisie is a powerful class by 'Third World' standards but it is still obliged to hang on to its semi-feudal landowning allies, to safeguard and defend imperialist investments, and therefore to swindle and deceive the great mass of the Indian peasantry and to repress the proletariat whenever it erupts in struggle.

The land reforms have indeed been a cruel deception for the majority of the peasantry. The British Raj was a compromise with the great feudal landowners and the Princely States. Successive land reforms have set national upper limits on the size of landownership. This is however either totally ignored, or, by a judicious 'division' of land amongst members of the landowners family effectively by-passed. Indeed the capitalist land reform has produced the classic results. A large, impoverished and growing rural proletariat at one pole and a small but rich rural bourgeoisie at the other.

By 1968 Bettelheim in his study of Indian agriculture, found the following agrarian profile existed. He outlined three fundamental rural classes: Malikis (rural capitalists and rich peasants), Kisans (middle peasants, owners, tenants, some

sharecroppers) and Mazdoors (landless peasants, labourers, poor tenants and sharecroppers).

The Malikis formed 17% of the rural population but owned 52% of the land; the Kisans formed 45% of the population and 36% of the land; the Mazdoors formed 38% of the population but owned only 8% of the land. Land ownership systems and patterns vary enormously across India but everywhere the small proprietors are being squeezed, the rural poor impoverished and driven off to the cities where industry cannot absorb them. This process is a testimony to the miserable failure of capitalism to develop India's economy.

As the dynamics of India's capitalist 'development' slowed down in the 1970s so the centrifugal forces began to strengthen the separate regional bourgeoisies. Each utilised nationality or religion to mobilise forces behind them to demand a greater share of the national cake. The impoverished and unemployed urban intelligentsia were easily mobilised to act as its ideologists and promise the world to the rural and urban poor. But in this direction lies only the Balkanisation of India which will further posture the sub-continent before imperialism and the inflaming of regional, national and religious hatreds. Given the lack of clearly demarcated 'nations' and the social stratification involved in religious and cultural differences this course is a road to communalist pogroms such as those that have taken place in Assam and in Bombay.

The only hope for India and its cruelly exploited millions lies in the relatively small but militant proletariat. The hard core industrial base of the working class is probably only some 10% of the total population. However it has shown, most recently in the great textile workers strikes in Bombay in 1981 and 1982 and in various one day general strikes, its ability to bring the vast country to a standstill.

In India - as indeed worldwide - the great problem facing the working class - is a crisis of leadership. India's two Stalinist workers' parties, the CPI and CPI (M) have tied the class conscious proletariat to the wheels either of Indira Gandhi or her right-wing and social democratic opponents.

The Indian working class does not need a 'popular' front with sections of the so-called progressive bourgeoisie and landowners. Such an alliance is a bloc against the workers' own interests, against the interests of the poor and middle peasants. Against this only the unfalsified programme of Lenin and Trotsky of an alliance with all the poor and the bulk of the middle peasantry for an agrarian revolution can give the working class the power to break the vicious cycle of exploitation and communal hatreds. This programme also involves defending minority nationalities, religions and castes against oppression and against their tormentors without in the least becoming advocates of fragmentation or nationalism. It would necessitate support for autonomy or even state separation where such moves did not themselves involve the oppression of other nationalities.

Whilst the working class must defend all democratic rights where they have a real progressive content of removing oppression it would be utopian to believe that a democratic programme can answer any of the basic needs of the Indian masses. For this the linked proletarian and agrarian revolution is needed. This can set itself no goal short of a revolutionary workers and peasants government based on workers and peasants councils. ■



Sites of Sikh mutinies

of Punjab (it doubles as capital for the adjoining state of Haryana); the abandonment of the government's plan to reduce the proportion of Sikhs in the Indian army (under British rule they constituted 30%, while the Sikhs are only 2% of the population. They still form nearly 15% of the army.); the creation of a National Council of Sikh shrines having authority over all Sikh shrines in India, not only in the Punjab; repartition of the water for irrigation from the five great rivers flowing through the region; the installation of a high power transmitter in the Golden Temple to transmit services throughout India; the alteration of inheritance laws for Sikhs to debar women from inheriting on the same basis of men (thus preventing the sub-division of landholdings); the revision of the Constitution to define Sikhism as an independent religion of India, not a sub-division of Hinduism.

The growth of Sikh particularism is largely a product of two separate tendencies. The accession in strength of the Sikh large landowners and rich peasants as a result of the 'Green Revolution' is one. The accompanying growth of large numbers of unemployed youth in the cities, including numbers of students unable to find jobs in the state bureaucracy is the other. The Sikh Students Federation, banned by Mrs Gandhi was a stronghold of the fundamentalist radicalism of Bhindranwale. The latter was himself a young but uneducated rural holy man who owed his prominence to having been secretly sponsored by Mrs Gandhi to outflank and weaken the Akali Dal.

This was of a piece with the Congress (I) Party's willingness to fan the flames of religious bigotry in order to divide or embarrass its



Armed Sikh militants

by Dave Stocking

Bolivia on a knife-edge: ARMY COUP OR REVOLUTION

THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT of Bolivia came to power as a result of a massive general strike against the military dictatorship of General Vildoso in October 1982. Under the impact of the world recession of the mid-1970s and the enormous corruption of a military junta totally tied to the cocaine smuggling industry, the Bolivian economy was near bankruptcy by the start of the 1980s.

An appeal by the Bolivian military to the International Monetary Fund for an emergency loan in 1981 resulted in IMF demands for a huge devaluation of the peso (a measure which massively pushes up inflation in a country dependent on industrial imports), an end to subsidies on staple foods and an increase in food prices. The attempt to implement these policies produced an explosion from the workers and peasants. By September the COB had been pressured into calling an all out general strike, while peasant organisations, primarily the CSUTCB (the United Confederation of Working Farmers), set up road blocks on all the main highways. The country was paralysed. The demands of the strike were for immediate elections, the restoration of trade union rights and a guaranteed minimum wage.

The military, recognising a real threat of a revolutionary uprising quickly entered into negotiation with the UDP (Democratic and Popular Unity). This was the electoral bloc which had effectively won the 1980 General Election, but whose presidential candidate Hernan Siles Suazo had been prevented from taking power by the military coup. Siles Suazo headed the major party in the UDP, the MNR-I, which had split from Paz Estenssoro's MNR-H over the latter's support for the military dictatorship of General Banzer (1970-76). Two other major parties which made up this coalition were the MIR (Movement of the Revolutionary Left) which started out as a pro-Cuban guerrilla organisation and moved rapidly to the right (it is now affiliated to the Socialist International) and the Bolivian Communist Party (PCB).

COMPROMISE

These parties quickly reached a compromise with the military. They abandoned the call for immediate elections and agreed to respect the results of 1980, when their coalition received the largest number of votes (40%) and the presidency, but the Senate was left with a majority for the right wing parties - Estenssoro's MNR-H and Banzer's National Democratic Action Party (ADN).

Through this "compromise" the military had ensured that no election would take place in a situation where the massive mobilisation of workers and peasants would have swept the right out and given the UDP a massive majority. This suited the UDP leaders just fine. Avoiding elections and continuing to face a Senate dominated by the right gave them a perfect excuse for not yielding to demands coming from the workers and peasants.

The miners rejected the compromise and continued on strike only to be morally blackmailed into calling it off by Juan Lechin - their leader - who threatened resignation if it continued. The COB proceeded to give the government their support.

Thus in October 1982 the UDP took power. A government of bourgeois and petit-bourgeois nationalist parties in alliance with the most influential party in the working class - the PCB. Siles Suazo immediately demanded a "social truce" from the working class for 100 days on the basis of the terrible economic situation left by the military.

The economic situation was indeed dire - for the masses. Unemployment was running at over

BOLIVIA IS ONCE again convulsed in revolutionary upheavals. Once more there are reports of an imminent military coup. In mid-April and again at the start of May the country was paralysed by two three-day general strikes called against the government's planned austerity measures.

Bolivia is one of the poorest countries in Latin America and has a history of alternating revolutionary upsurges and bloody military dictatorships. The country represents an extreme example of the impact of imperialist exploitation on the semi-colonial world. The domination of the economy by US imperialism - through its multi-national corporations, its banks and aid agencies and its control of the world commodity markets - has kept the masses in chronic poverty. The stunting of the country's economy has also led to a stunted and weak Bolivian bourgeoisie, in its majority totally dependent on and subservient to US imperialism.

The Bolivian toiling masses on the other hand have developed powerful trade union and peasant organisations. Led by the Tin Miners, the working class has a record second to none in Latin America in terms of tenacious revolutionary struggle against the super-exploitation and poverty imposed on them. Whilst the Bolivian proletariat has not been able to bring its revolutionary struggle to the conclusion of establishing its class power, the Bolivian bourgeoisie has been unable to hold political power through its parties. The result has been a series of military dictatorships - a form of bonapartism which have governed in the interests of US imperialism and the IMF, with the support of those sections of the bourgeoisie most closely linked to the US and other imperialist states.



UDP supporters greet Siles Suazo

12.5% without taking into account the massive endemic underemployment (partial employment in street trading etc). Utilisation of industrial capacity stood at only 47% while the foreign debt stood at 3.9 billion dollars. The interest payments on Bolivia's foreign debt stand at 976 billion dollars, 300 million more than expected earnings! The nationalised tin mines (COMIBOL) had been run down dramatically with little investment and corrupt management. Comibol for instance was producing 36% less tin in 1982 than it was 20 years earlier and for a world market where the price of all raw materials including tin has collapsed with the slump

Such a situation demanded an immediate set of measures to defend the workers and peasants' conditions. A government which really stood by the interests of the workers and peasants would have cancelled the enormous interest burdens, expropriated the private mining interests and subsidiaries making huge profits out of Comibol, established a minimum wage protected against inflation and supported the expropriation under the control of the workers of any company laying off workers or sabotaging production. It would have supported the legitimate demands of the peasants for cheap transport by expropriating the right wing truck owners and establishing state control of transport. Most importantly it would have mobilised the workers, peasants and the rank and file soldiers, to disarm the military coup-mongers and create an armed workers' and peasants' militia.

"SOCIAL TRUCE"

Of course the UDP did none of those things. Quite the reverse it set out to solve the crisis at the expense of the working class. Their "social truce" in November 1982 involved a wage freeze, the establishment of a pathetic minimum wage of 8,500 pesos (none of the unions demand a wage minimum of less than 25,000 pesos) and a series of economic measures designed to placate the IMF - such as favourable treatment to the private mining sectors and agri-businesses. To cap it all the UDP had the cheek to call these measures part of a "New Economic Policy" - likening it to the Bolshevik's policy of the 1920s! The strength of the CP in the miners' union and the COB and the tacit support of Lechin minimised working class opposition.

In other periods these military regimes have been incapable of containing and repressing the organisation of the workers and peasants. In 1952 and again in 1970 the workers, using an insurrectionary general strike, defeated the military in open battle. However in both of these revolutionary situations the workers and peasants were betrayed by their own leaderships. The ruling class was obliged, temporarily, to advance its "left" nationalist wing to power. In 1952 this was the bourgeois nationalist MNR (Nationalist Revolutionary Movement) led by Victor Paz Estenssoro and Hernan Siles Suazo, in 1970 it was the "left" wing of the military headed by General Torres.

In both cases these governments were composed of representatives of the "nationalist" bourgeoisie, those sections of the capitalists and small businesses which gained least from the domination of imperialism. Indeed they were often driven out of business by the multinationals and demands of the international banks. Their programme promised independent capitalist development utilising state capitalist nationalisations, in particular of the tin mines.

Because the strongest sectors of the Bolivian bourgeoisie, tied up as they were with imperialism, were opposed to such a strategy, both the MNR government and that of Torres were forced to turn to the working class and peasantry for support in their struggle with the imperialists and with their foes within the Bolivian bourgeoisie. Concealing their true class character behind a mass of anti-imperialist and "revolutionary" verbiage, they balanced between the working class and peasant organisations, which they prevented from seizing

power, and the pro-imperialist oligarchy, whom they excluded from political office.

But the prime task of these "left" bonapartist regimes was to bureaucratically control and demobilise the mass movements which repeatedly threatened to escape their control and put in question capitalist property in general. In collaborating with these regimes to gut the revolutionary movement the leadership of the workers' movement - the Bolivian Workers Centre (COB) - under Juan Lechin played a treacherous role. Lechin, along with the Bolivian Communist Party (PCB) kept the workers' movement tied to these "anti-imperialist" regimes even when they openly turned to attack the workers' and peasants' interests and organisations. (See *Workers Power* No.40 March 1983 and *Permanent Revolution* No.2 Summer 1984 for analyses of these two revolutions.)

The organisations claiming to be Trotskyist in particular the POR (later POR-Combate and POR-Masas) provided no alternative lead to the working class. Indeed they adopted wholly opportunist tactics towards both the governments of the MNR and of Torres. By disarming and exhausting the workers and peasant organisations these regimes paved the way for military coups backed by the most reactionary pro-imperialist sectors of the bourgeoisie - General Barrientos in 1964 and Colonel Banzer in 1971. In 1984 the same cycle threatens to repeat itself unless the Bolivian proletariat can create an effective revolutionary communist leadership, that can lead it to the seizure of power and the establishment of a genuinely revolutionary workers' and peasants' government. ■

RE-RUN

Unbelievably in 1983 the same strategy is being actively supported in the Bolivian workers' movement today by the USFI section in Bolivia - POR Unificado (formerly POR-Combate). The POR Unificado appears to have both strength and influence in one of the biggest and most militant mines in Bolivia at Huanuni (in a joint slate with dissident Maoists they won a majority in trade union

elections at the mine against the PCB). Yet they are using this influence to peddle the same policies that led to disaster in 1952.

Leading USFI member Livio Maitan argues in *International Viewpoint*: "Today the demand for co-government implies specifically that the COB and the CSVTCB do not consider themselves to be represented by the UDP and President Siles Suazo, but that they want to represent the workers and peasants in government in an independent way." (Our emphasis-WP).

Thus this demand helps the masses to understand the class nature of the conflicts and political issues. It has an anti-capitalist potential." (I.V. 12 March 1984).

So Juan Lechin, with his 30 year record of betrayal, is to represent the Bolivian Proletariat in "an independent way". One blushes to point out such an elementary lesson to a so-called Trotskyist but whenever did a "worker minister" in a Bourgeois government prove to be independent of anyone except the working class? This project, far from helping the masses to call things by their real names, deceives and deludes them. Such a government is not an exercise in workers' education but a popular front which is one of the last political resources of the bourgeoisie against the proletarian revolution, one which in Trotsky's words "dooms the working class to impotence and clears the road to fascism."

Lechin's desires however were not to be granted. Siles Suazo rejected his demands for co-government and after retreating on new IMF measures following a 2 day general strike in December last year, returned to the attack 2 months ago.

The proposals which started the current crisis originated in a 4 year plan for the economy pushed by the PCB. In April the MIR, who had walked out of the government in January 1983 (in order to try and stitch up a solution with the MNR-H and ADN) were enticed back on the basis of a new austerity package which would satisfy the demands of the IMF.

On April 13th the UDP announced the toughest ever austerity package under the signatures of all the parties including the PCB ministers of Mining and Labour. It involved a massive devaluation of the peso, the ending of subsidies on basic foodstuffs - a loaf of bread jumped from 12.5 pesos to 70 pesos a loaf. Food in general went up 480% fuel rose by 400% and railway transport 600%!

The congress of the FSTMB which met just after the austerity package saw massive losses for the PCB in elections to the leadership, while the dissident Maoists and the Partido Socialista-Uno (a centrist grouping) gained considerably (POR-U lost ground in the elections.) However Juan Lechin was elected unanimously as General Secretary as he has been every year since 1944!

A further three day general strike was called over May Day with Lechin denouncing the factory workers of La Paz for organising for an indefinite general strike and threatening to resign in protest. As a result the government managed to divide the workers - settling with the oil and railway workers.

The COB leadership's policy of exhausting the workers with a series of 2 and 3 day general strikes was having its effect. The factory workers were forced back to work after several more days with their General Secretary Eduardo Siles declaring they "would resist any fresh calls for general strikes because they paid a high price for the last one." Not surprisingly the army chose this moment to declare its intention to "defend peace and public order" amidst rumours that two ex-generals who master-minded the coup against Siles Suazo in 1980 - Garcia Meza and Arce Gomez - were back in the country plotting a new coup with sections of the military.

The current situation in Bolivia is fraught with enormous dangers for the Bolivian masses. The policies of their leaders - the PCB, Lechin and co - are merely paving the way for a military coup to triumph over an exhausted workers' movement. Such a coup might initially have a demagogic left-nationalist character but if it did this would be but a stage to the consolidation of a vicious right-wing dictatorship. To avoid this the Bolivian workers need not more 2 and 3 day general strikes designed to "let off steam" and "moderate" the government policies, but an all-out offensive against it. It needs to launch an indefinite general strike which demands a complete end to austerity and which organises the workers and peasants organisations into their own councils or soviets which organise their own militias and appeal to the rank and file of the army to join their struggle against the coup mongers.

The Bolivian masses need a revolutionary party of the proletariat. One which unlike the POR-U refuses to peddle illusions in class collaborators like Lechin, but uses the united front tactic to demand that the leadership of the workers' parties break with the bourgeois parties and enter onto the road of struggle for a genuine workers' and peasants government. ■

by Stuart King

FOR FIGHTING BLACK SECTIONS!

FOR THE FIRST time in many years, attention is being paid to the voice of black workers in the Labour Party. The question of what road to black liberation is being seriously discussed. The Party, which for decades has relied upon the tacit support of black workers, is now faced with the question of how best to organise them and fight for their interests.

The focus for this welcome change is the formation of black sections in constituency parties in London and Birmingham Birmingham, and the 300-strong conference held in Birmingham on June 9th by the black section the Black Sections Steering Committee.

The campaign for black sections - on a par with the already existing women's and youth sections - grew in momentum in the wake of last year's Party Conference. Composite 28 - calling for the setting up of black sections and positive discrimination - was referred to the NEC. A "working party" (ie a delaying tactic) was set up in April of this year.

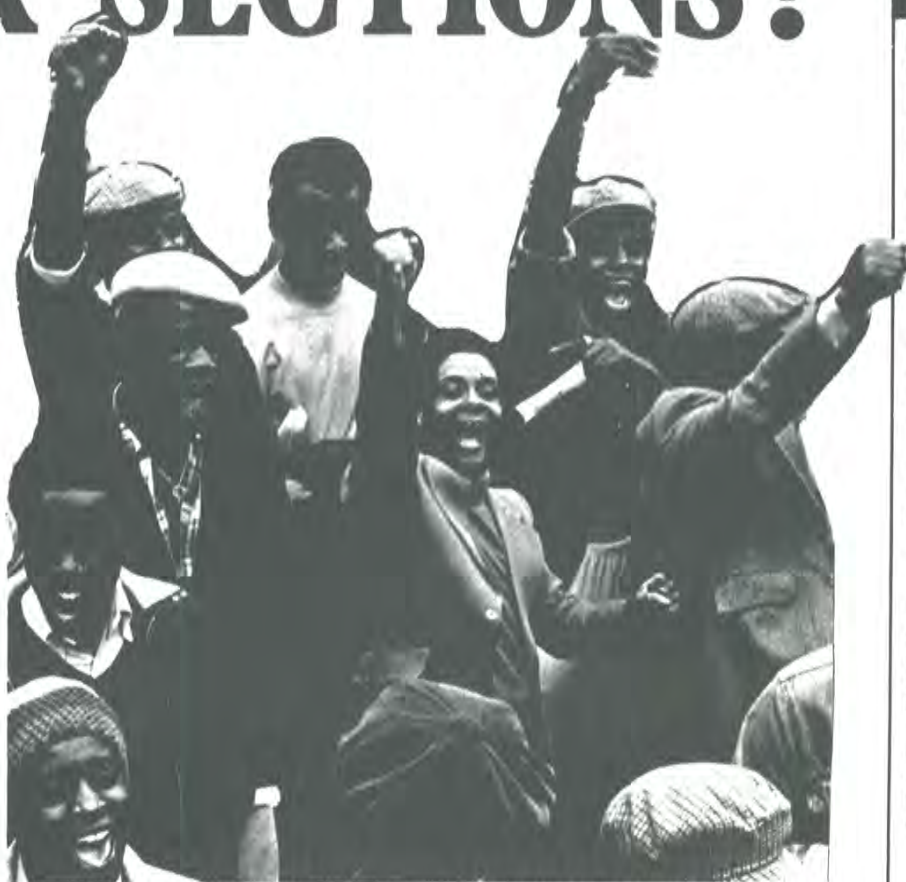
In the week leading up to the conference, attacks from the Labour leadership on the idea of black sections turned into a barrage. Kinnock alleged that black sections could "cause trouble" and "increase the disadvantages" of the black community. Kaufmann declared that they would be "ghettos", while Hattersley pontificated that "black sections are a retrograde step".

Despite these attacks, the Birmingham conference made clear its support for black sections, and undoubtedly gave the Party leadership a nasty jolt. In an attempt to defuse any move for constitutional change in the Party, or the widespread setting up of black sections, the Report of the NEC working party is to be circulated to all CLPs. Walworth Road hope that by making some gestures towards 'consultation' they can defuse the movement.

The prospect of black workers being organised in the Party scares the leaders for two reasons. Firstly, many leading members of the Party - such as Hattersley - are MPs for constituencies with large black working class population. If these workers were organised into a fighting black section in the party, many rightwing Labour MPs for inner city constituencies could find their positions threatened.

The other reason, indeed the main reason, the Labour leaders fear the development of black sections is Labour's governmental record on race. It is appalling. The anti-racist rhetoric it spouts in opposition is light years away from its actions in office. It was a Labour government which carried out the first major racist attacks in restricting immigration, with the 1968 Immigration Act. It was a Labour government which set up the hated SPG, notorious for harassing young blacks in London. It was a Labour government which approved the implementation of the 'Sus' laws in the mid 1970s.

As for tackling the racist police force, Hattersley wants to convince black people that they are pure as the driven snow. He wrote in *Renewal: Labour's Britain* "We also need to convince the ethnic minorities that the police are - and will remain - on their side." (p129)



After all that is why the leading police chief Inspector Peter Hohnson referred to blacks as "our coloured brethren, or nig-nogs". A good example of police being on the side of black and Asian people!

Labour's role is to mollify blacks with tinkering reforms, not to mobilise them against the state racism that oppresses them in their daily lives. The existence of black sections potentially threatens this class collaborationist role. They could become a focus for opposition to the leadership, a forum for activists and a means of, in Kinnock's patronising phrase, "causing trouble."

What should be the attitude of Party militants? We must support the right of black comrades to form caucuses - sections - within the Party. The CLPs and wards must give every assistance where black members want to form black sections. The section should be on a par with the youth and women's sections. As in these sections the fight for democratic organisation and against all bureaucratic restriction must be resisted. They must have the right to send delegates to the GMC, the right to forward resolutions and participate fully in all aspects of party activity and decision making. At a national level, the black sections must fight for a national conference which can elect delegates to Annual Conference, nominate candidates for the NEC and submit resolutions.

Positive discrimination for black workers as candidates for position in the Party should be supported, but in no way treated as a panacea. Whilst it can be a way of encouraging the participation of black workers at all levels in the Party, it can also, if used in a bureaucratic or routinist manner, be a way of ignoring the question of black oppression and not fighting it. It should not be seen as paying lip service to the need for black workers to be represented within the Party. Militants must fight for positive discrimination to be used as an opportunity to increase the activity of black workers.

If this is not built into the perspective of black sections from the outset there is the danger that the officials within the Party, or within a trade union, will

use the black section, to channel the fight against black oppression away from the centre of the Party's activity. Equally the black section could find itself concentrating upon increasing the number of black councillors or acting as a training ground for parliamentary careerists.

To avoid these pitfalls, black militants must fight to ensure that black sections become organs of struggle, forging links with other sections in struggle in the labour movement. Local police harassment must be campaigned against by the Labour Party and the unions. Black sections must win labour movement support for black self-defence of the communities from the attacks of the police and the fascists. Campaigns against the inhuman deportations, like that of Afia Begum, and the immigration laws that lie behind them, must be mounted.

The struggles of black women and black youths must also become a central focus for the activity of black Party militants. The massive oppression of both of these sections of workers can be fought through the organised strength and action of the labour movement. They must be won to fighting the racism inside the labour movement, from within it. Campaigns against unemployment must pay special attention to unemployment amongst black youths.

If black sections do organise such struggles then they will find themselves up against the Labour leadership. Every prevarication by this leadership, every obstacle they place in the way of the struggle against racism and every failure by them to fight uncompromisingly for the interests of black workers should indicate to black militants the limits of Labour's ability and desire to fight for black liberation.

The road to black liberation lies not in the passing of Acts in Parliament, or pious talk in the Labour Party, but in the organised power of the working class, acting to transform the whole of society by smashing the class divided, capitalist system, that breeds and feeds off racism. □

by Matthew Cobb (Norwood CLP)

WORKERS IN ACTION



Spread the action on the railways

On June 9th a mass meeting of NUR and ASLEF railworkers at Shirebrook voted to black all coal. Before this meeting the workers had been handling scab coal from the Nottinghamshire area. Shirebrook is the main depot handling coal for the Notts area.

This show of solidarity is particularly heartening for the striking minority in Notts. Support from the railworkers at Shirebrook is vital in helping the Notts strikers make their action bite.

The decision to act was undoubtedly helped by the railworkers' feeling of outrage at Thatcher's exposed manoeuvres against them. Now the task is to build on that action and outrage. A lot still needs to be done.

Coal is still being moved - up to 50% of normal levels - and the decision was for two weeks only, after which it is to be reviewed. The Midlands District Council of the NUR has produced one leaflet. But this is nothing like enough.

In the coming week special mass meetings of the rail unions need to be called in every depot and station. Striking miners should be invited to address them and explain their case. Total

blacking of all fuel must be won from such meetings.

This way real rank and file unity across the unions can be built. At present the Triple Alliance is bureaucratic and ineffective. A campaign of meetings a struggle to win blacking, all raises the urgent need to activate it at the base.

Local and regional rank and file delegate triple alliance bodies need to be established. These should also be open to other sections of workers as well, laying the basis for a national rank and file movement.

Railworkers must be told that unless they fight with the miners now they will find themselves isolated in six months time when the Tories go for major cuts in the railways. If the miners lose, no rail job will be safe. In a fight to defend jobs, railworkers will need all the support they can get. They can best achieve this by fighting now alongside the miners. A joint fight can put paid to the Tories' job slaughtering plans in both the pits and on the railways.

BLACK ALL COAL!
STRIKE WITH THE MINERS!

Longbridge setback

The decision to return to work at BL Longbridge without winning the reinstatement of the victimised transport driver Zedekiah Mills represented a tactical victory for the management and an important missed opportunity for the workers.

The strike itself was the most serious for some years at Longbridge. 18,000 workers were laid off and some 20,000 cars were lost. The decision of 600 engineering workers at Cowley to strike rather than be laid off, like the strike at Longbridge itself, was an important indicator of renewed militancy and confidence at BL.

In the aftermath of the dispute the previous month in the Trim Shop, which stopped Mini and Metro production and also threatened to close Cowley, management were determined to hold out against this new mood, even at the risk of delaying the launch of the new Rover. Above all they could not afford to weaken the position of their foremen who were given dictatorial powers in the 92-page Slaves' Charter introduced under Michael Edwards.

To force management to drop their intransigent position needed equally determined and far-sighted leadership of the strike. It was precisely this which was missing. The Works' Committee, under convenor Jack Adams not only did not offer any way forward but actually postponed a scheduled meeting

of the Joint Shop Stewards' Committee during the strike.

There was no lack of issues on which to focus the obviously widespread hostility to the bosses and to raise the sights of the strikers above the (absolutely necessary) defence of one victimised worker and onto the vicious BL regime as a whole. The tracks at Longbridge now run for 35% more of the week than two years ago, productivity is now double that in some other British car plants but BL workers have had only 5.6% pay rises in the last two years. This year's claim should be brought forward from November. With the miners on strike BL workers are in the best position to take the initiative and tear up the "agreement" foisted on them at the lowest point in the slump when defeat and fear of the dole gave the advantage to management.

Binding links with the miners could have been forged during the strike itself and still can now. Coal is regularly delivered to Longbridge in unmarked lorries, the internal railway still carries it to the forge and the foundry. Indeed rumours abound that coal is being stockpiled at Longbridge for shipment to other plants. Militants in all BL plants need to fight for the immediate blacking of all coal movements in solidarity with the miners and as the first blow in their campaign to rip up the Slaves' Charter and win decent pay and working conditions. □

Arbitration trap for teachers

Teachers are now in the 6th week of the most determined fight for a decent pay rise seen in many years. But many of us must now be wondering what it is we are actually fighting for. Area after area has shown its willingness to take action, with schools in previously moderate areas like the Shire counties voting unanimously to strike. However it must be remembered that the leadership who are deciding on the action we take are NOT waging a serious fight to achieve the declared aim of a return to our Houghton salary levels. Instead the loyalty and militancy of the membership is being wasted in a campaign which is only intended to force the employers to agree to arbitration.

This means that, in the middle of the miners' strike, which has created the best conditions in which to fight for a decade, we are taking the pressure off the Government and, instead, relying on the opinions of a so-called "independent" personality to decide what we are worth. Worse still, the NUT negotiators are committed to acceptance of the arbiter's decision - but not the employers. The question has to be asked - "Why are we being led into this dead end?"

The reasons are two fold. First is the desperate desire of our well paid and unelected negotiators to be taken seriously by management, and yet still be in total control of any action. This has meant that all tactics have been de-

vised from above, with individual areas and schools being isolated from each other. Not one area has been pulled out in its entirety, no national levy has been organised to finance long-term strike action, and above all no attempt has been made to hit at the examination system, surely our biggest weapon.

This final point links in well with the second reason for the present apology for a serious campaign. Both the bureaucrats and a great deal of the membership believe that we are "professionals" and, therefore, a special case. Nothing must be done to alienate public opinion. Our pupils must not be too adversely affected and above all we must not be seen to be acting like a real trade union composed of workers, that would certainly stand in the way of a "good" award by the arbitrator! How can we claim to be underpaid professionals if we behave like manual workers, "blacking" exams and picketing other workers out?

Already the lessons of this year's pay claim are clear. As long as the NUT is controlled by bureaucrats who consciously oppose the mobilisation of the membership, teachers will not be able to fight effectively to defend either their living standards or their jobs. Militants in the NUT must be united in a powerful rank and file movement to wrest control away from the present leaders and to turn the NUT into a fighting union. ■

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