

Workers power

THE MONTHLY PAPER OF THE WORKERS POWER GROUP
No. 3 September 1979 12p

Don't mourn Mountbatten

LORD MOUNTBATTEN OF BURMA, at various times the First Sea Lord, Supreme Allied Commander of South East Asia and Viceroy of India, was not merely a titled member of the parasitical Windsor Dynasty. Workers should know him for what he was — an intelligent and resourceful militant of British Imperialism in the long period of its decline from first to third or fourth rate power.

It is ironic that he fell a casualty of the latest war to which that dogged and bloody retreat gave rise. He died at the hands of forces seeking to liberate Ireland from the malign power that condemns Irish men, women and children to the persistent harassment of an army of occupation. To suffer SAS secret assassination squads, the imprisonment and

torture of those seeking to protect their own people and to expel the oppressors.

It is, of course, part of the propaganda of successive British governments to criminalise these freedom fighters, to deny that there is a war being fought in Ireland. So said their predecessors in India, Cyprus and Kenya.

As Marxists, and not nationalists, we have a different view of the tactics to be employed to end the oppression of Ireland. The killing of a retired ruling class militant, member of the royal family etc., will enrage the ruling class, but it will not injure or weaken it. Indeed, such actions, carried out by a highly secret military formation and unrelated to the mass action and involvement of the working class in both Northern and Southern Ireland, will provoke repression without preparing the forces to deal with it.

The successful attack on the paratroops, whose regiment murdered fourteen unarmed civilians in Derry in 1972 is, however, doubly defensible. Only rabid pro-imperialists and their Fleet Street hirelings can condemn it.

Of course it is personally tragic for the friends and families of working class boys driven into the Army by unemployment and sent to die in Ireland. But there is only one solution. Get the troops out NOW. 'But', scream the Labourite politicians as well as the Tories, 'That would be a victory for the IRA.' So it would be. It would be a victory for every working class person in Britain as well.

as Tories throw down the gauntlet...

TUC ducks out!

IF MURRAY and the TUC chiefs have their way there will be no serious resistance mounted to the Tories' plans to impose new legal shackles on the unions.

The TUC leaders still consider themselves bound by the 'Code of Conduct' that they agreed with Callaghan in order to prop up his tottering government by holding down industrial militancy. They have promised the Tories that they will stick to their side of that bargain by limiting the size of pickets, policing and controlling them to make sure that 'secondary picketing' is curtailed.

All this was made clear to James Prior, Tory minister with special responsibility for pushing through anti-union legislation, when the TUC employment policy committee met him on August 22nd. The TUC leaders put it to Prior that their, 'voluntary agreement' was a far better bet for holding down militancy in the period ahead than his plans for legislation. As they explained in a press statement, 'Mr Prior was warned that if they were enacted his proposals could have as serious and disastrous an effect on the country's industrial relations as had the provisions of the 1971 Industrial Relations Act.'

pleaded

Murray and co are terrified that, as their TUC predecessors discovered between 1971 and 1974, mass resistance to Tory measures will force them into a confrontation with the Tories. That is what worries them about the new legislation, that is why they pleaded with Prior that, 'At a time of already severe economic difficulties, new and divisive legislation of this kind would be a self-inflicted wound.' After meeting Prior, Murray declared, 'I will do a deal with the devil if I think I can get a deal out of it.'

He and his fellow TUC leaders are desperately seeking to do a deal with the Tories that will prevent them from being forced to fight. Hence their offer to the Tory government of a voluntary agreement to restrict picketing in exchange for the Tories shelving their plans for legislation. They wish to avoid, at all costs, a situation where millions of workers resort to political strike action to stop the Tory plans. Such action they could not guarantee to control.

Prior was warned by Murray that if the Tories press ahead with their plans — and they will press ahead in October or November — then the TUC will be forced to consider their 'Code of Conduct' rendered null and void. But, this does not mean that Congress House will be turned into a battle centre for the organ-

isation of strikes, mass pickets and solidarity action in defiance of the Tory laws and High Court rulings. The resolutions tabled for the TUC in September make that absolutely clear.

Not one of the traditionally stronger and militant unions, the NUM, AUEW, T&GWU, has put forward a motion on anti-union legislation. Neither has the General Council. Calls for a campaign of resistance to the Tory proposals have come from the NGA, the ACTT and the Musicians' Union. The Bakers' and UCATT have called for an end to all talks with the Tories which, in the UCATT's words, 'are based on their proposals as published.'

Murray and Moss Evans are deeply committed to keeping the talks open with the Tories. It is the T&G that has led the campaign to delete UCATT's call for an end to talks and to replace it with a suitably vaguely worded commitment to, 'vigorously resist the government's proposals.'

Behind the threats and promises, from the order paper and from the conference rostrum, to more or less 'vigorously' resist the Tory attack, lies the reality that the TUC has no plans for action and struggle against the Tory laws. Of the resolutions to Congress, only the one from the Bakers has called for a specific day of action. The General Council is under no express instruction to organise a fight.

divert

The General Council is hoping to divert the rising tide of militancy and opposition to the Tories into a, Campaign for Economic and Social Advance.' This is aimed at securing, 'a balanced growth of employment and output in both the private and public sectors, entailing measures to strengthen the economic base, including the strategic use of North Sea oil and gas revenues and effective policies against import penetration.'

Faced with unemployment reaching the two million mark, and inflation rising at a record

monthly rate in July, the General Council wants to divert the mounting anger and militancy into a series of rallies and demonstrations for import controls, fairer taxes and to defend, 'the powers of initiative of the National Enterprise Board.'

Talks with the Tories aimed at changing Thatcher's mind, backed by a passive campaign of protest, that is the perspective of the TUC General Council.

The Tories' minds will not be changed by the 'responsible' bleatings of Murray and company. Chancellor Howe knows that the outlook for the British economy is, 'frighteningly bad'. He has described the economy, in the Wall Street Journal, as off course with its engines failing. The Tories look to a marked increase in unemployment plus legal sanctions against effective trade unionism as the only way to hold back mass resistance to their plans for British capitalism.

While Prior was declaring his commitment to bankruptcy and shake out, 'bankruptcy clears a

firm's balance sheet and may often be the best way of restoring the most effective use of resources and jobs', Prior was dispatched to tell TUC leaders to prepare for new legislation against trade union rights.

The struggle to defeat the Tory attacks cannot be left to the TUC leaders. Shop stewards' committees must draw up battle plans to preserve all jobs, oppose all speed-up and resist all attempts to cut living standards.

Councils of Action must be forged in every locality composed of representatives of bodies capable of taking strike action, mobilising solidarity stoppages. Only in this way can the working class prepare to face the Tory legal attack head on and prevent the General Council from betraying the trade union movement to the Tories.

**INSIDE
THE TUC LAST TIME
FOR A GENERAL STRIKE
TO SMASH ANTI-
UNION LAWS'**

Stop Khomeini's executioners



FOURTEEN SOCIALISTS have been sentenced by an Islamic Tribunal in Ahwaz in the oilfields of Southern Iran.

They are members of the Socialist Workers Party and are named as: Fatima Fallahi, Mahsa Hashemi (two women members of the party sentenced to life imprisonment) and the remaining twelve: Mustafa Gorgazadeh, Morteza Gorgazadeh, Hamid Adib, Kambiz Lajevardi, Firooz Farzinpour, Mahmoud Kafaie, Ali Hashemi, Kia Mahdevi, Mohammed Poorkahvaz and Hormoz Fallahi who have been sentenced to face the firing squad.

The trial was held in camera and without the defendants being allowed legal representation. As we go to press the resignation of the Islamic prosecutor in Ahwaz has gained a retrial for the defendants but their lives remain in the greatest danger. All those in the British and International Labour and democratic movements who protested the Shah's murderous tyranny should join in immediate protest to the Iranian Government, pickets of its embassies etc.

Labour Party democracy

LABOUR'S annual conference in October is already being billed as the setting for the sharpest clash between the Right and the Left of the Party that has been witnessed for decades.

Within days of Callaghan's humiliating electoral defeat Arthur Scargill was openly nominating Benn to succeed the discredited Callaghan. Benn, in his turn, was calling for an act of indemnity and oblivion on individual records in the last government.

With his record as architect of the crippling productivity deal in the mines and the national strike breaking force in the tanker drivers' strike, Benn will find Scargill's 'Left' endorsement invaluable. His own programme is an eclectic re-collection of left reformist nostrums culled from various sources — Anthony Crosland in the 1950's, the TUC in the 1970's and the timeless chauvinism of the CP's import control and anti-Common Market obsession.

Benn's confidence in 'Parliamentary Democracy' is unbounded. It lies at the root of his new campaign for Labour Party democracy. Benn is anxious that pressure for 'economic, industrial and social change, now so evident inside the Labour Movement' should find expression in the Labour Party, 'if the perspective of peaceful change by democratic means were to get blocked within the Labour Party, it would not just be the Labour Party but parliamentary democracy itself that might get undermined.'

This is why Benn has raised a series of proposals for, 'constitutionalising' the leadership of the Party in and out of office and for ending the leader's powers of patronage.

Meanwhile, the National Executive Tribunes — Allaun, Skinner, Kinnoch and Heffer, have put on the agenda the re-election of MP's, the election of the Party leader by a tripartite college of constituency, union and PLP delegates and the control of the Party manifesto.

Callaghan has hurled down the gage of battle. He has insisted on the age-old unwritten law of British Labour that the 'resolutions of the Party conference are expressions of opinion and that how and when they should be implemented must be left to the Parliamentary Party.' He has also announced that that the PLP majority will not submit to the measures of democratic control proposed by the NEC. The Right is standing firm. They are willing to split the Party rather than let the Left win. They do this in the confident knowledge that the Left's bluff can always be called.

The real decision lies in the end not with the 'activists of the shrivelled constituency parties nor with the Westminster MP's. It lies with the union bureaucrats who wield the bloc vote which comprise 90% of the conference votes.

Callaghan is trying to weld together a phalanx of right wing union bloc votes. He has Weighell, Basnett, Sirs, Hector Smith

and, of course, Frank Chapple. Duffy of the AUEW would be a powerful addition if he can use his entire bloc vote against the delegation's wishes.

The Party's declining membership, the deteriorating organisational structure and an envisaged £1 million debt by 1980, give the union leaders the pretext for demanding an enquiry into Party organisation. They can strangle the NEC with their purse strings in the last analysis. The new 'right' from Reg Underhill to Shirley Williams, would use such an enquiry to purge what they term the, 'underground plotters'.

The measures for inner party democracy raised by the Tribunes and the 'new Left' supporters of 'Militant' and 'Workers' Action' should be supported as an aid to exposing the pro-boss politics of Callaghan, Healey, Foot et al. But they do not get to the heart of the matter.

Control by the constituency activists — including GMC union delegates — can never be achieved while the bureaucrats dominate the unions and, via them, the bloc votes.

The whole spectrum of Labour Party democrats are evasive on the key question of the unions. Are they, or are they not, in favour of the abolition of the bloc vote?

The bloc vote represents, within the Labour Party, the bureaucratized dictatorship of the union leaders over their members who constitute the mass base of the Party. Within the unions this dictatorship is subject to the contradiction between the function of the unions as effective defenders of the workers' interests and the class collaboration of the leaders. This frequently sets the mass base against the bureaucrats, throwing up militant rank and file leaders who stand in a democratic relationship to the mass of their members.

This contradiction is not carried over into the Labour Party, nor can it be under the present structure. The 'open valve' between Party and unions, so beloved of the Workers' Action supporters is, and can be, only a trickle. Only a revolution in the structure of the Labour Party could allow for real mass participation by workers.

The shrinkage of the Party's membership, organisation and funds has alarmed many on both the right and the left of the Party. Benn proposes a, 'mass membership based upon factory, and office branches, working closely at every level with the trade unions on policy and organisation'. 'Workers' Action cautiously suggests strengthening the trade union vote by, 'giving trade union organisations below the national level direct representation at conference.'

The fight for a mass revolutionary party

When adopting positions on these proposals, revolutionaries must remember that the Labour Party is a qualitatively different body from the unions. It is a political party, defined by its programme. By this definition it is a bourgeois party since its goal

is the integration of the working class into capitalism. It does differ from other types of bourgeois party in that its members are organised workers. The trade unions are essential bedrock organisations for the economic self defence of the class.

The fight for a mass revolutionary party, as opposed to a grouping for making Marxist propaganda, must obviously mean the replacement of today's Labour Party, the destruction of its reformist leadership, its programme and structure by workers who look to it as their party. In the case of the Labour Party this means utilising the contradiction between the demands of the politically conscious workers and the betrayals and undemocratic practices of the leaders.

We do not advocate the abolition of the bloc vote and the handing over of the Labour Party to its constituency activists. This would effectively disaffiliate the unions whilst further depoliticising them. Neither are we in favour of Labour Party factory branches, of organisations based on reformist politics separate from the union and factory floor organisations.

Instead we are in favour of taking the bloc vote out of the hands of the bureaucrats and into the hands of the bodies in which the affiliated 'members' exist and struggle, using the bloc vote as a lever for politicising the millions who are made formal members of the Party through union affiliation.

Workers' Action has argued that, 'what is at stake is whether the Labour Party continues to be a stable instrument of bourgeois rule or whether it becomes the party responsive to its grass roots activists and to the struggles and needs of the working class.' To promote such a Labour Party, which is neither revolutionary nor reformist, Workers' Action argues that, 'Labour activists need an organised left wing which will stand firm whatever the pressure from the Right.'

There can be no schema for such a transformation of the Labour Party, however. The leaders and bureaucrats will hound, persecute and expel any dangerous minority before it can become a majority. Those who offer a peaceful schema for the transformation of the Labour Party do not understand the dialectics of struggle.

WORKERS' POWER says openly — we support all measures which make the leaders of the Party which claims to represent the working class answerable to the workers who pay, work and vote for this party. We recognise the hold of the bureaucrats in the unions as the most important bastion of the Labour Party leaders. Unless this hold is broken the hold of the parliamentary leaders will not be shaken.

The task of the working class is not only to transcend reformism for revolutionary communism, but to build an organisation capable of expressing that programme and of mobilising workers in the struggle for power, namely a revolutionary Communist Party.

FIGHTING THE LOCAL CUTS

PHOTO: I.McIntosh (IFL)



TED KNIGHT: former member of Socialist Labour League, supported by SCLV at the last general election, his first reaction was to implement the cuts.

WHEN IT COMES to opposing the cuts, short memories are at a premium for Labour and Trade Union leaders. Today there is no limit to their denunciations of cuts in public spending imposed by the Tory government. Yesterday, however, when Labour was forcing through the biggest cuts since the war, there was hardly a whisper, let alone a fight, against the attack on social services.

It is when the Tories are in power that workers have to be particularly wary of the verbal militancy of their leaders. Talk is cheap, the only thing of real value to workers in defending their jobs and services is a commitment to action to prevent the cuts being made.

Lambeth

Nowhere can the disparity between words and action be more clearly seen than in those areas where Labour-controlled councils have to make a choice between defending the interests of those who elected them and carrying out the demands of central government. In this light it is instructive to look at the experience in Labour-controlled Lambeth in South London.

The refusal of the local Area Health Authority to implement the called-for £5½ million cuts because they believed it would endanger their patients, has focused attention on the AHA. The speed with which the AHA was replaced by Whitehall-

appointed substitutes underlines the determination of the Tory government to force through its programme. The cuts in funds for the local health service are only a part of the problem facing Lambeth, in addition £3m has been cut from the Rate Support Grant (the subsidy from central to local government).

The Labour Council, led by Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory supporter Ted Knight, took no time in deciding their response to this vicious attack on local services, they immediately agreed to a 4¼% cut across the board of their spending programme. The decision was taken without any discussion inside the Labour Party locally. Anger, at both the decision itself and the way in which it was taken, led to a special conference of the four local Labour Parties.

At that conference, on July 29th, a resolution was passed calling on the Labour Group to reverse its decision and instead organise in the local Labour movement for a campaign against the cuts. The conference forced Knight to agree to argue for that position at the next meeting of the Labour Group to be held in mid-September.

Whilst it is always necessary to force such commitments out of the likes of Ted Knight, it is obvious that no reliance can be placed on a man whose first reaction was to enforce the cuts. Verbal agreements mean nothing, the real test is to call for support for local health workers in a campaign for non-implementation of the cuts which will be ordered by

the new AHA, this is what should be demanded of the Labour Group at its September meeting.

dangers

The situation in Lambeth reveals a number of other dangers, spineless Labour leaders apart, in the fight against the cuts. They are dangers which will be met with up and down the country. For example, the AHA, in trying to find a peaceful way out of their quandary, (they are, after all, a management body) based their argument on Lambeth being a 'special case' because it had a particularly large number of hospitals, including three teaching hospitals. Such an argument, which will be popular in many areas, is a complete diversion from the real issue. The cuts are a nationally-directed assault on the living standards of all workers. They can only be defeated by widespread action from all workers. The special case argument is a block against the development of that kind of action. It constantly tends to divide workers instead of uniting them against a common threat. The stand taken by the AHA could be used as a rallying point for the real campaign, but only if its central weakness is opposed at every stage by the demand for direct action to stop the cuts.

Central to such a campaign must be the involvement of industrial workers, not just in token solidarity gestures but in strike action to support public sector workers taking action to save jobs and services. Whilst their jobs might not be at stake, their

living standards, indeed quite possibly their lives, are. In the context of building the necessary action on the basis of alliances between those in the public sector and those outside it, militants and revolutionaries will have to guard against the passive 'Public Sector Alliances' that the union bureaucrats will no doubt call for. What is needed is unity based on action.

Another problem highlighted by Lambeth is the role of the Labour Party on local councils. Undoubtedly a wave of anger was created by the Labour Group's original decision. That anger and the willingness to fight amongst local rank and file members of the Labour Party has to be harnessed. The potential treachery of Labour leaders, as demonstrated by Ted Knight, can only be exposed by the call for direct action to stop the cuts, to deliberately overspend in order to maintain jobs and services, and for support for workers who take action to defend their jobs.

These demands should be made on Labour councillors in a clear and unambiguous manner. If they say they are opposed to the cuts will they back, will they lead, direct action to stop them?

The Tory government knows full well that a determined fight in the localities could force the Labour councillors to take up such a campaign and they have already begun to prepare their defences. They have formulated plans to introduce legal sanctions against Local Authorities that refuse to carry out their demands. Vacillating councillors have to be told, only a continuation of direct action can possibly protect them from the law, as was vividly demonstrated by the Pentonville Five in 1972.

Andy Smith

The attack on abortion rights presented by the Corrie Private Member's bill, now at Committee stage in the Commons, is part of a general ruling class offensive against the rights and living standards of working class women.

British capitalism's need to rationalise and discipline its workforce in order to keep up profit levels, means it has to roll back the limited advances made by working class women in the last two decades in the areas of pay, employment, welfare facilities and democratic rights. Legislation such as the Equal Pay and Employment Protection Acts were attempts by the ruling class, through the Labour Government, to head off working class pressure, and of course these laws were designed and used in the interests of management as much as possible. But even such legislation is proving too much for the employers, many of whom are now demanding the Tory government repeals or amends the Employment Protection Act, to allow them more 'flexibility'. Undoubtedly this means more and more part-time and temporary women workers will be left without protection.

strategy

The attack on abortion rights is part of this ruling class strategy. It is not that capitalism wants more babies produced, nor even that it cannot afford the abortion facilities - the cuts certainly do hit plans for daycare abortion clinics, but in fact, pregnancy and childbirth cost the NHS a lot more. The point is that the right to abortion allows women a limited measure of control over their lives. It acknowledges that a woman's place is not just in the home and

family. The ruling class would like to insist that home and family are woman's 'natural' first concern.

The Tory government will pursue this strategy with increasing ruthlessness, but we should remember that in the field of both living standards and ideology, Labour paved the way. What prevented the Labour government going further was the pressure exerted by the struggles of working class women and the continuing movement for women's rights. This was reflected in the adoption of policies in favour of abortion by many unions and in the large scale mobilisations against White and Benyon. And it led to the TUC's commitment to call a demonstration in the event of any restrictive legislation being presented - and in its inability to go back on the commitment hence the demonstration scheduled for October 28th. If the Corrie Bill is part of a general ruling class offensive, it can only be defeated by organised working class resistance. The campaign has to be led by those most threatened and most capable of organised resistance - working class women. We have to build a positive and offensive campaign which demands adequate daycare facilities and legislation for Abortion on Demand.

Our aim must be to build an ongoing labour movement campaign for Free Abortion on Demand, led by working women, whether Corrie is defeated or not. In arguing around the bill, we have to tackle religious and 'moral' objections and the male chauvinist arguments that will undoubtedly surface, making clear that the attacks on abortion rights are part of the attacks on the whole working class.

The TUC demonstration offers opportunities to lay the basis for such a campaign.

Free Abortion on Demand!

Arguing against the Bill

In arguing against Corrie's proposals we must make clear that any legal or medical restrictions deny a woman's right to control her own fertility and her own life. We must raise the slogan FREE ABORTION ON DEMAND!

- *Even under the present law, the choice does not lie with the woman. In areas where anti-abortionists - doctors or Area Health Authority members - dominate, NHS abortions are available only to a minority.*
- *Any time limit can force women to continue with pregnancy against their will. Time limits are not really about the 'rights of the foetus' but about denying the rights of women.*
- *The charities may fill gaps in the NHS, but women still have to pay. Access to NHS abortions should be straightforward, there should be adequate day care facilities for safe and early abortions.*
- *'Conscience clauses' raise the moral objections of doctors and nurses above the democratic rights of women. We have to oppose them in any form.*

Some pro-abortion activists argue for various compromises, for example accepting free abortion on demand up to twelve weeks in exchange for allowing further restrictions on late abortions. Others may be tempted to concentrate on pressing for the restrictions on the charitable sector to be lifted. Such compromises will allow most middle class women continued access to abortion but will leave out those who can't pay - in other words the great mass of working class women.

CORRIE'S BILL

-WILL RESTRICT THE GROUNDS FOR ABORTION

It will be almost impossible to get a legal abortion unless the woman's life is in 'grave' danger or there is a 'substantial' risk of 'serious' injury to the woman's physical or mental health or that of her children.

These changes reinforce the doctor's responsibility for the decision, they open the way for anti-abortionists to bring court cases and will make doctors unwilling to carry out abortions on social grounds.

-WILL REDUCE THE UPPER LIMIT TO TWENTY WEEKS

Effectively this means a limit of sixteen weeks because of the difficulty of determining the date of conception. Of the 1% of abortions at present done over twenty weeks, only those where the foetus is severely handicapped or where the woman is likely to die, will be permitted. The other women, for the most part menopausal women or young girls, will be forced to continue their pregnancy.

-WILL PARALYSE THE CHARITABLE SECTOR

At present abortion facilities are scandalously dependent on charitable organisations because of Labour's refusal to provide adequate facilities on the NHS. By forbidding financial links between the referral agencies and the clinics, and by insisting on a licensing system, the Bill will virtually destroy the charities. This will mean that in those areas, such as the West Midlands, where abortion provision on the NHS is notoriously bad, there will be hardly any access to abortion at all.

-WILL WIDEN THE CONSCIENCE CLAUSE

The rights of those in the medical profession with objections to abortions will be written into the Bill and the burden of proof will no longer rest on them.

Area Health Authorities will be able to use the excuse of 'unsympathetic staff' for inadequate facilities. Anti-abortionists will use the clause to encourage objectors.

Committees to mobilise for the demonstration must be built in every area. They must be based on delegates from unions and workplaces, drawing in working women and housewives not previously involved in the struggle for abortion rights. This will mean getting speakers to union meetings, organising women's caucuses where branch and regional officials obstruct the campaign, leafleting workplaces and estates and organising factory-gate and community meetings. We must work for a massive and militant trade union mobilisation on October 28th, with contingents of working women perhaps previously never politically active. We have to ensure there is pressure, through the Labour Party and through trade union sponsorships, on every Labour MP, forcing them to vote against Corrie.

But we have to point out that demonstrations and pickets will not be enough to defeat the Bill. The Tory offensive will only be stopped by working class action and revolutionaries have to argue for whatever steps are necessary to defend the interests of working class women on this issue. These points must be raised in the local campaigns, in the work to mobilise for October 28th. Experience teaches us that working women entering struggle can be determined enough to go beyond the union bureaucrat's definition of 'normal' trade union action.

These mobilising committees should not restrict themselves to the Defend The '67 Act slogans of the TUC, neither should they be disbanded once the TUC demonstration is over. Such mobilising committees can lay the basis for an ongoing campaign, based on working women, fighting for Free Abortion on Demand. At this moment considerable support has been shown for the struggle against the new Bill. NAC branches have been revived and received donations and requests for speakers. Now sections of young women have become active in NAC, Women's Voice and anti-Corrie Campaign bodies.

campaign

But the campaign at present is being led to disaster. The Campaign against Corrie Committees, set up nationally and locally, have dropped the slogan of Free Abortion On Demand in favour of simply Defending the 1967 Act. While the battle against Corrie must necessarily defend the rights we have at present and unite with all those prepared to do so, it is foolish to think that by dropping the 'Free Abortion on Demand' slogan, pro-abortion forces can make any real advance. Anything short of this gives powerful weapons to the anti-abortionists, by suggesting that the medical profession, Church and State have the right to decide, not women themselves. We have to continually point to the inadequacies of the 1967 Act. The last NAC Conference, supported by the IMG, voted

against calling a Trade Union Conference to fight against Corrie and for positive legislation until the campaign against Corrie was over. This will mean that the Labour and Trade Union leaders will be let off the hook. No lead will have been given to organise those working class organisations that can be won to force the TUC and Labour leaders to fight for, and commit themselves, to their formal policy of Free Abortion on Demand.

Tied to the maintenance of capitalism, the Labour leaders are unable and unwilling to introduce even reforms for basic democratic rights when they get in the way of capitalism's needs. We must warn of this persistently while fighting to ensure that the Labour Party abolishes the 'free vote', introduces legislation for free Abortion on Demand and commits itself to doing so when in office.

Building a Labour Movement campaign for Free Abortion on Demand is thus part of the process of building a working class movement strong enough to defeat the Tories and oust the reformist leaders.

The IMG, who were the main instigators of NAC's move to set up the Campaign against Corrie Committees, justify the dropping of the Free Abortion on Demand slogan on the basis of drawing in the 'broadest possible forces' from the labour movement. But this approach substitutes winning the support of labour bureaucrats for winning the support of rank and file trade unionists. It is important to make demands on the trade union and labour leaders. It does make a difference having official support for the demonstration against Corrie. But we must warn against the silvery tongues of the

bureaucrats. They want to ensure they keep control of the fight against the Tories on all fronts - our aim is to break that control.

This will mean building a campaign that demands that the leaders fight, but is capable of leading struggles independent of them. Instead, NAC offers what they call 'friendly pickets' to make requests of, and give friendly advice to, the TUC leaders.

misleaders

There are those, in the WSL and many women within Women's Voice, who rightly criticise the dropping of the Free Abortion on Demand slogan and the IMG's friendly approaches to the bureaucrats. They point, correctly, to NAC's record of only defensive campaigns. But these groups have turned away from the fight against the misleaders of NAC at its meetings and conferences. At the last NAC conference WORKERS POWER was the only group to openly oppose the IMG's strategy. In many areas, NAC, and Campaigns Against Corrie Committees are the main mobilising forces at present. We urge all those who want to build a militant positive campaign, led by working women, to fight with us to win the commitment of these bodies to the slogan of Free Abortion On Demand, and for a delegate structure based on the organisations of the working class.

Jane Bruton

For a General Strike against their anti-union

FACED with the speed and decisiveness of Thatcher's first 100 days, the leaders of the British Labour Movement are obviously floundering. Their first reaction is to calm down the initial wave of anti-Tory hostility which has brought thousands of unionists to their feet. James Callaghan and Tony Benn have both rushed in to remind workers that the Tories have a five year mandate. On the trade union side, Murray and Evans warn workers not to be provoked. Both Parliamentarians and Bureaucrats urge workers to remember the sanctity of the law and elections, and to wait until Thatcher makes herself unpopular. These bankrupt 'generals' only hope of winning is to rely on Thatcher and Howe making major blunders. Tribune eagerly waits for the U-turns which the 'facts of life' will force on the Tory Government.

Revolutionaries have a diametrically opposite task, to warn the working class of the strengths of their bitter enemies and to indicate the key tactics necessary to meet and defeat their onslaught. The TUC and Labour Party leaders want above all to divide the strength of the workers' movement. They want to unite the direct action of rank and file workers to sectional economic struggles or protests over unemployment, cuts, etc. The generalisation of this resistance must be left to parliamentary protests and a general election in 5 years time.

Against this we must hammer home that the Tories attack is a political one - using the State, the law and its agencies of enforcement, the police, the SPG and, when necessary, the army to defeat the class sector by sector. To advocate piecemeal resistance to a co-ordinated offensive, to call for abstention from using the strike weapon because strikes must not be political is to sell the pass to the enemy.

Direct action

The Tory attacks will certainly drive workers to use industrial direct action in the fight-back. To fight massive closures only the occupation is effective; to fight cuts, strike action is vital. Workers will spontaneously seek to link these struggles, to achieve solidarity. The motto 'Unity is Strength' on so many union banners reflects the deepest

class instinct of the workers movement. The question is how to apply this consciously to the battles ahead and in particular how to do so against the Anti-Union legislation which will be introduced in the next Parliament. The restrictions on picketing, solidarity strike action and the closed shop will arm the judges, the police and the SPG picket-busters with the legal pretext they need. They will take their signal to victimise and isolate militants, intimidate the already weak-kneed bureaucrats and fragment the anti-Tory struggles on wages, unemployment, cuts, women's rights, anti-racism, etc.

Spearhead

The legal attacks are the political spearhead for all the rest. As such, they must be met with the generalised direct-action resistance of the combined forces of the labour movement. The Tories have a parliamentary majority impregnable to Labour MP's protests, to lobbies, delegations, petitions and their ilk. There can be no doubt that, as in 1971, they will go through Parliament and be acted on with gusto by the viciously anti-working class judiciary, unless the working class shows that it will use the full force of its organisations to halt industry, to paralyse the state machinery rather than submit to the destruction of rights won generations ago. The political general strike is the only tactic which can either

put the Tories into headlong retreat, forcing them to abandon their legal shackles, or further mobilise the forces necessary to drive them and the class they represent from power altogether.

Thus we argue for the general strike because, given that the Tories' onslaught is political having as its object the use of state power (law, police, etc) to cripple the fighting strength of the unions, any serious resistance must itself become classwide and political if it is to win. We do not counterpose this slogan to partial demands - either existing sectoral battles or days of action, one day general strikes, etc. We say that all of these can realise their objectives only as steps towards, manoeuvres to build, the forces for a general strike. Indeed without the perspective of a general strike and under the present leadership, they will be used to de-fuse and de-focus the struggle. These partial actions cannot be left to their implicit logic, their spontaneous tendency to go forward.

Protest

Conscious militants and revolutionaries must raise within them the immediate perspective of the general strike against the self-limiting protest poli-

tics of the TUC/LP leaders.

The Labour Movement is, however still firmly under the control, the misleadership of the Union and Labour Party bureaucrats. No effective action will be taken unless this hold is broken. Yet millions of workers have the illusions in parliament and the law which form the basis of Labourism - of reformism in its British form. A break from them will not be sudden or total. Revolutionaries, therefore, have to demonstrate how this hold must and can be broken step by step.

Struggle

Firstly, the initiative for action must come from below, from the workplaces, from the rank and file leadership, the shop stewards, etc. We must support and advocate democratic self-organisation in struggle. To link existing and future struggles we must fight to build local councils of action based on workplace delegates. We must also initiate and amplify the call on the trade union leaders to mobilise all of Britain's 12 million unionised workers for a General Strike against the anti-union measures. To achieve this appeals for joint action must be made to the Communist Party and its

Liaison Committee for the Defence of the Trade Unions, to the SWP and its Rank & File organisation to call a national conference of workplace delegates, shop stewards and combine committees etc., with observers from Trades Councils, local Labour Parties, area-based trade union branches, union officials, etc.

Halt

Such a conference must thrash a strategy for mobilising the movement - demonstrations, mass meetings in work time, days of action directed towards a general strike to halt the legal attacks.

Within this perspective revolutionaries have to propagandise and explain the nature and logic of the general strike.

If we must alert the rank and file leaders and militants of the working class to the need for a General Strike to meet the Tory threat, then we also have a clear duty to explain the full implications of this tactic. The mass strike, involving millions of workers, brings the capitalist economy and the normal life of the state to a standstill. It thus graphically demonstrates even to the most backward sections of the working class, the fact that this

The TUC 1971-73: Killing the Bill or containing the fight-back

The experience of the battles against the Tories between 1971 and 1974, and of the present struggle of the engineering workers, suggests that the TUC will not be able to hold back the struggle against anti-union laws or channel them into peaceful protests under reactionary slogans. Should that be the case, the TUC is quite capable of putting itself at the head of the battle against anti-union laws so as to de-mobilise and betray that struggle. While Congress leaders threaten the Tories with the spectre of 1972 and 1974 in the hope of reaching a deal, militants must not forget that it was rank and file Trade Unionists, not the TUC, who initiated the struggle against the Tories last time round. The TUC 'leaders' did their best to de-rail and demobilise mass action against the Tories last anti-union laws. They 'opposed' the Industrial Relations Act only because legal sanctions put them on the spot and involved the whole Trade Union movement in head-on clashes with the law and government. Then, as now, their ideal

was to use the threat of working class action to scare the Tories into being more reasonable and leave it to the officials to discipline the rank and file. The struggle against Heath was permanently in danger of sabotage from Vic Feather and Co. There were real victims of this thresher - the Post Office workers, the building workers (including the Shrewsbury pickets) and indeed the whole working class movement de-railed and subordinated to Wilson and Callaghan's anti-working class government.

The Industrial Relations Act, which came into effect in stages between December 1971 and February 1972, had similar aims to both Wilson's "In Place of Strife" and Thatcher's present proposals. Trade unions, in order to be 'recognised' - thus receiving tax relief and having immunity from being sued - had to register. They could only do this if their rule-books were acceptable to the registrar.

This allowed the state to determine who was admitted to the union, who was eligible for nomination for office as well as to impose the secret ballot. The Act set up the National Industrial Relations Court (NIRC)

which had the power to order strikers back to work for a 'cooling off' period, order a ballot during a strike, and was responsible for adjudicating on "unfair industrial practices".

Employers and individuals could apply to the court to take action against blacking and sympathy strikes. Other sections of the act set out to undermine the closed shop.

Initial opposition to the proposals was co-ordinated by the CP led Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions (LCDTU). It led strikes and marches against the Bill in December 1970. The Broad Left dominated AUEW called a series of one day strikes in opposition to the Bill. It was only after these calls and the widespread response to them, that the TUC launched its own education campaign against the Bill.

Vic Feather fulminated at the 'outrageous proposals' contained in the Bill. The Financial Times, however, gave a far more accurate account of the intentions of the bureaucracy; "the fundamental attitude (of the TUC) is probably not so different from that of the Confederation of British Industry. Its readiness to negotiate with the Government can be read between the lines, in the reference to the need for higher productivity".

(FT, 12th January 1971)

The TUC's actions were rapidly to confirm that its campaigns were not intended to challenge 'the law' but rather to push the Government into a more flexible negotiating mood. After a massive 500000 strong demonstration called by the TUC on February 21st 1971, a special March TUC conference committed itself to complete opposition to the Tory laws and a policy of no co-operation with the (NIRC) court established to police the laws.

The TUC leaders were to back down as soon as their policy brought them onto a collision course with the Tory Government and its law. They refused to mobilise solidarity behind the January 1972 miners strike which smashed the Governments 7% wage ceiling.

Countless acts of solidarity from rank and file trade unionists culminating in the mighty mass picket that closed Saltley coke depot showed, by comparison, the spinelessness of the TUC leaders.

The TUC leaders words were put to the sharp test of action in March 1972. Liverpool dockers picketing a St Helen's container firm taking jobs from the dockers, were found guilty of 'unfair industrial practice' by the NIRC. The TGWU refused to attend the court in line with TUC policy.

The court fined the T & G £5000 and followed it up with a fine of £50 000. Were immediate strikes called by the TUC, or even the TGWU, to hit the bosses where it

Picture: Andrew Ward (Report)



Fearing that the workers' struggle might break out of the TUC's harness, as it did in 1972, Len Murray now pleads with workers not to be provoked by the

hurt - in their purses? Not at all. The TUC leaders immediately backed down, changing their policy to allow unions to decide whether or not they attended the court.

When the railway unions, AS and NUR, quietly co-operated with a Government ordered 'cooling period' and a compulsory ballot, the retreat of the trade union leadership rapidly turned into a rout. How the railway workers recorded a sounding majority for strike action in the face of the Tory Government and the retreating trade union leaders.

While the trade union leaders look for cover, looking for ways of a

the trade unions

strike to smash

laws

society rests entirely upon them. If every strike has a tendency to arouse and even politicise those involved, then the General Strike makes enormous leaps in understanding and political maturity possible.

The General Strike pits class against class, with the government acting openly as the bosses executive and deploying if it can the mass media, the police force, the army, the judiciary to break the will of the workers and their leaders. The bosses and the government must keep the ordering and functioning of society in its own hands, mobilise the lower middle class and backward unorganised workers and produce a split in the workers' ranks. The General Strike would be, particularly in Britain, a struggle of the conscious vanguard against this, a fight for the allegiance of the great mass of the class, previously poorly organised or unorganised. It thus requires a complete break with the passive routine and fossilised bureaucratic practices of traditional trade unionism.

Sole judge

The government has its organisation for maintaining 'essential services', i.e.

ing a conflict, the miners, the dockers and the railway workers kept alive the determination of millions of trade unionists to destroy the Tory anti-union laws. The National Ports Shop Stewards Committee continued to black inland ports despite pressure from the TGWU leadership to end the blacking.

In July 1972, the NIRC ruled against the picketing of Midland Cold Storage by London dockers. The dockers continued picketing and refused to attend the court. Warrants were issued for five dockers who were duly arrested and taken to Pentonville gaol to "purge their contempt".

The gaoling of the dockers acted as a detonator to a massive strike wave aimed at freeing the dockers. The dockers struck, followed by the Fleet Street printers. Scores of engineering works and building sites ground to a halt, huge demonstrations took place daily. In the face of a growing strike wave of general strike proportions, the General Council called a one day general strike to take place one week after the dockers were gaoled.

In the face of growing rank and file militancy, and therefore the prospect of a general strike which could rapidly get out of the control of the TUC leadership, the Government backed down. On the recommendation of the Heath Government's Official Solicitor, the court freed the dockers. They were carried shoulder high from the gaol still declaring their contempt.

At the end of the 1972 Heath's Government tried to use the courts again, this time to undermine the right of the AUEW to discipline the notorious scab James Goad. The

for strike breaking. The workers strike committees, or councils of action, must be the sole judge of what services are 'essential'. The workers meetings, marches, pickets must be protected against the 'guardians of order'.

Guard

Every workplace must select squads of young and able-bodied people to form a disciplined workers defence guard. The General Strike of 1926 saw all these features spring up within a matter of days. This experience must be re-learned. The miners who could organise flying pickets can certainly organise defence squads.

Glynneath Soviet Level supplied strikers with 'essential' coal in 1926.

Picture: South Wales Miners Library.



union was fined £5000 in November and a further £50 000 in December. Engineers struck in protest in January 1973 and the AUEW refused to pay the fine. The NIRC retaliated by sequestering the funds of the union to pay the fine. The TUC remained dormant refusing to mobilise workers in line with their official policy.

This inaction gave the go-ahead to the emboldened employers of Con Mech in Woking to take the AUEW to court in September 1973 for their official strike action against the company. The NIRC ordered £100000 of the AUEW's funds to be sequestered. Two, one-day protest actions organised by the union with no backing from the TUC failed to stop the action of the NIRC.

Rank and file organisation was able to break out of the straight-jacket of passive protest that the trades union leaders tried to impose on the struggle against the Tory Government and its Industrial

The struggle for the General Strike, let alone the strike itself cannot but draw attention to the leadership of the labour movement. If the TUC General Council - the 'General Staff of Labour' - are in fact concealed foes of the working class, then the task of building an alternative leadership, exposing and ousting these leaders, must be a constant one.

Warn

Revolutionaries must warn, clearly and unambiguously, about the treachery to be expected from these leaders, Lefts as well as Rights - the Scargills as well as the Duffys. But our words alone will not convince.

Democratic workplace organisation must take control of the movement, must hold each and every official to account, so that betrayal from the top will not throw the whole movement into confusion.

Demands must be put on the leaders to take all the necessary measures to win. Thus, as soon as they equivocate or obstruct then can be replaced or by-passed. Thus, at a certain point in the General Strike a standing national conference of delegates from the councils of action - a national strike committee - would have to replace to bureaucrats.

Use of the General Strike tactic does not necessarily mean that the strike will go through all its phases. In 1972, for example, the beginnings of spontaneous mass strike action to free the dockers plus the threat of only a one day General Strike by the TUC forced Heath to back-down.

Thus the mere spectre of a general strike can force a ruling class, ill-prepared and divided in its counsels, into a retreat. On the other hand, the reformist leaders will, if the working class cannot exercise control over the strike, terminate it with a rotten compromise, selling short the gains the working class could make.

Thus a number of outcomes are possible depending on the relationship of forces. The main task is to maximise the power, self-organisation and awareness of the class, fighting to rally a new political leadership from the ranks of worker-militants.

The more decisively the class takes up the question of taking power over the strike in the localities, the more likely the aims of the strike are to be won and extended. At the moment we pose the central goal of the strike as the smashing of the anti-union measures. This goal is clear, precise and allows the union leaders the minimum room to equivocate.

An alternative slogan that is likely to appear, spontaneously from many workers, as it did in 1972, is for the strike to 'kick out the Tories'. That this slogan arises points to a central feature of the general strike - that it poses from within itself as a tactic the question of who rules in society at large, who is the master of the house.

The 'Kick-Out the Tories' slogan obviously represents the recognition that to stop the anti-working class crusade the bosses party must be driven from power. But it is purely a negative slogan - what is the alternative? This depends on the stage of development of the strike. Before the forces are even mobilised a purely negative political slogan like this suggests automatically a call for a Labour Government, for a general election.

The experience of 1972-4 and the succeeding Labour Government shows that it would be criminal for revolutionaries to advocate, even by implication this outcome. Why? Because Labour is, despite its reliance on the trade union leaders, a bosses' party that would after a brief interval take up the policies dictated by the CBI and the IMF.

Power

A general strike with the massive politicisation and organisation of the class as an alternative power in society presents the opportunity, the necessity to take state power (not just governmental office) away from the bosses. Working class state power would have to be based on the councils of action.

To effect this the workers defence squads would have to be armed and replace the bourgeoisies own 'law and order' squads, the police and the army. This could not of course happen without a struggle.

For the small, fragmented, politically confused forces of those calling

themselves revolutionaries in Britain today a direct struggle for power led by a new revolutionary party is not the most likely outcome. In a general strike situation where the hold of the existing leaders had not been decisively broken but where powerful councils of action with their own demands going far beyond the normal expectations of a Labour government, it would be necessary to demand that the reformist leaders take the power, base themselves on the councils of action and immediately implement their demands or make way for revolutionary leadership.

If the direct transfer of state power was posed by the existence of a workers militia and the disarray of the state forces, we would raise the demand for a Workers Government, to effect the transfer to the full armed class rule of the proletariat. To those who say this is an unrealistic schema we have to point to the events in France in 1968, in Italy in 1969, in Portugal in 1975.

Even though such action begins from today's limited defensive action and involves today's working class, with all its prejudices and illusions fostered within it by capitalist society, it leads inevitably to the awareness of these workers that they can decisively alter the direction of political and social life - an experience that the cynical routine of electoral politics or routine trade unionism can never effect.

It is this break from the de-politised straightjacket of capitalist social-life that makes possible that leap in consciousness, that instinctive spontaneous drive towards socialism, that the events in France Italy and Portugal witnessed to a greater or lesser degree.

Without a doubt there will be those on the so-called revolutionary left like the SWP, who will argue against raising the general strike slogan 'at the present time'. They will argue that 'the class is not ready for it' or that it is 'ultimatisit' which amounts to the same thing.

Method

The political method behind this sort of argument is quite clear, only raise slogans which already have begun to be raised in the class. In other words the proponents of this view believe that it is the duty of revolutionaries only to act as a megaphone for the slogans and ideas generated spontaneously by the class struggle. We know, both from theory and past practice what this will result in. For instance, the SWP did not raise the call for a general strike in 1972 until workers were already taking political strike action. Then they raised the useless slogan 'General Strike can free the Five'.

In 1972, the slogan 'Free the Five' raised by the SWP, focussed action on one particular effect of the operation of the anti-trade union laws, rather than on the laws themselves. As a result it was enough for the Tories to discover the Official Solicitor and release the five dockers, without removing the law from the statute book. Thus the working class and the AUEW in particular had to bear the brunt of a renewed Tory attack not six months after Pentonville.

As the class struggle heightens, the inability of centrist groups to maintain a coherent strategy or effective tactics will produce the opportunity for realignment amongst those who wish to build a firmly based revolutionary party that can win the vanguard of worker-militants to it.

At the heart of the debate over the correct programme for the period will be the question of the general strike, whether it should be raised and how it should be raised. In future articles we will examine the history of the general strike as a tactic and the demands and forms of organisation that revolutionaries should raise alongside this tactic.

by Stuart King

by S McSweeney

New show trials in Eastern Europe



Schmidt and Brezhnev toast each other in Bonn last year

IN ANTICIPATION of mounting resistance to rising prices and food shortages, the Stalinists of Eastern Europe are preparing a new wave of repression. The forthcoming show trials of leading activists of the Czech Charter 77 is the clearest evidence of this.

In East Germany, new laws have been swiftly introduced which raise to five years in jail the penalty for passing out of the country information, 'likely to damage the interest of the German Democratic Republic'. In this way the regime hopes to crackdown on the flow of information about its increasing use of repression. Their new legal package includes a sharp increase in the penalty for organising political groups in East Germany. The regime is obviously anxious to clamp down on the small circles of opposition in the colleges and the workplaces, in advance of price increases expected to be announced in the Autumn.

The Czech trial is intended to intimidate the increasingly confident forces of opposition to the Husak regime. Those on trial include the country's leading playwright, Vaclav Havel, Vaclav Maly a Catholic opponent of the regime and Peter Uhl who considers himself a Marxist and a Trotskyist. But the trial of these well-known individuals follows on from scores of trials of unknown workers and youth in the provincial towns. It is the mounting opposition to the regime among young workers that the Czech authorities hope to silence by their planned show trial.

debts

The trials take place at a time of mounting economic difficulties for the bureaucracies of Eastern Europe. They are burdened by crippling debts to the Western banks, the Polish bureaucracy, for example, has a debt of 15 billion dollars. East Germany's debt stands at 7 billion dollars and the regime calculates a trade deficit for the current year as 310 million dollars already, while the domestic economy is now only expected to grow by 3% rather than the 5.1% originally planned.

One way out of these problems for the bureaucrats of Eastern

Europe is to increase their borrowing from, and dependence upon, the major financial institutions of the capitalist world market. Hungary, for example, has just announced the foundation of a major international bank in Budapest. The bank has been financed by France, Italy, West Germany and Japan. It will not only finance trade between the West and Hungary, but also trade between the East European states themselves. At the same time the Western banks will control 60% of the shares of the bank. Similarly, the Poles recently invited a holidaying Chancellor Schmidt to discuss credit for the ailing Polish economy to the tune of 1 billion Deutsche Marks.

The financial institutions of the West will, of course, demand as their price that the economic policy and activities of their debtors come under their scrutiny. Increasingly they will insist that they take orders on how the credits should be spent.

Equally vital for the Eastern European bureaucrats is that they shift the burden of economic problems onto the working people as far as possible. Hungary is intending to remove food subsidies on basic foodstuffs by 1981. Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Bulgaria have all announced major price increases on food, drink and clothing in the last few months.

No wonder, then, that resistance to the bureaucracies is on the increase. Twenty six strikes were recorded in East Germany in the early summer. In Poland, in August, some four thousand marched to Victory square in Warsaw where they heard speeches for democratic rights while the militia looked on without dispersing them. The Polish regime still remains incapable of pushing up basic food prices for fear of a working class emboldened by their strikes of 1970 and 1976 and enraged by food shortages.

It is in this context that the

Stalinists are moving to stifle opposition. Above all they are afraid that active opposition will cease to be the prerogative of isolated pockets of intellectuals and will, instead, spread among the ranks of the workers themselves.

programme

In the face of this developing withhunt the organised currents of opposition in Eastern Europe are notably weak both in numbers and in terms of political perspective and programme.

The opposition in Poland is increasingly tied to an alliance with the Catholic Church. The Church has no interest in the democratic opposition other than to extend its own rights to peddle its reactionary and obscurantist message among the masses, thereby actually bolstering the prestige and status of its hierarchy.

Amongst the East European oppositions, illusions abound that the Western states can be a force for winning democratic rights from the bureaucracies. Schmidt's recent mercy visit to the increasingly unpopular Gierak regime in Poland illustrates that the West has a real and vested interest in the political stability of the East European regimes. It would only move to undermine the rule of the bureaucracy if that would mean the establishment of an order and stability that would enable the West to directly dominate and exploit the countries of Eastern Europe for its own advantage. Until then it will continue to deal with the ruling bureaucracies.

Marxists

Even those in the East European opposition who consider themselves to be Marxists, display a markedly gloomy pessimism in the potential of the only force in Eastern Europe that has a consistent interest in destroying the hold of the bureaucracy and developing the pro-

ductive forces in their own hands. The working class, in Poland in this decade, in the Romanian miners' strike of 1977 and in East Germany this year has shown itself to be the only class with the force and ability to settle accounts with the bureaucracies. But, the writings of the East German prisoner Bahro, and of the Hungarian Marxist Marc Rakovski exude a deep pessimism in the possibility of the East European working class playing the decisive role in political change in Eastern Europe.

They both see the working class as hopelessly atomised and demoralised in the face of an all-powerful monolithic state. Instead they look for allies in the West European Euro-Communist parties, hoping that a Marchais or a Berlinguer, in their search for alliances with the bourgeoisies of France and Italy, will prove decisive in the struggle against the bureaucracies of Eastern Europe.

Revolutionary Marxists in the West have a duty to argue with the Left in Eastern Europe, to attempt to win them to a programme of struggle for workers democracy, soviets, factory councils and democratic trade unions against the bureaucracies and in sharp counterposition to the Catholic, Liberal and Social democratic oppositions.

Workers' organisations in the West must step up their acts of solidarity and concrete assistance for

all those workers struggling for democratic rights against the anti-working class bureaucracies of East Europe. Decisive support from the workers of Britain, Italy and France will play a crucial role in defending and encouraging the self-organisation of the working class against the Stalinist regimes. The opposite is also true. For example, the refusal of the T&GWU to support three jailed members of the Free General Workers' Union in Russia will necessarily serve to strengthen the hand of pro-bourgeois and anti-working class forces in the Eastern European regimes. It will positively bolster the prestige of Thatcher and Carter in the ranks of the opposition.

duty

In a conflict between Catholic dissidents like Maly and the anti-working class Czech bureaucracy, it remains the duty of all working class organisations to deny the bureaucracy's right to speak in the name of the working class, its right to muzzle and repress Czech society, whilst pointing out that the liberal catholic and social democratic oppositions cannot lead the East European workers to victory.

Dave Hughes

NICARAGUA

Sandinistas turn to US

OVER ONE month after the fall of the hated Somoza regime in Nicaragua, strategic governmental power is still in the hands of the bourgeoisie — much to the satisfaction of the US imperialists.

The Sandinista leadership has joined with the anti-Somoza bourgeoisie to form a Provisional Government. There is nothing new in this decision by the Sandinistas. While containing forces who considered themselves Marxist they have always oriented themselves to a strategic alliance with the bourgeoisie, both before and after the fall of Somoza.

The request from the radical leader, Borge, now Minister of the Interior, for arms from the US plus his insistence that he is not a Marxist have no doubt caused great relief in the planning rooms of the Pentagon.

The real threat to imperialist domination of Nicaragua does not come from the Sandinista radicals ensconced in the cabinet with their bourgeois allies. The

real threat to the regime, and the plans for stabilisation of the imperialists, comes from the workers and peasants of Nicaragua.

The masses have emerged from a horrendous and savage civil war to face hunger, massive unemployment and the destruction of their towns and villages. They expect from the new regime not only the end of the Somoza tyranny but also land, work and the end of hunger.

The new government has already set itself on a course which will lead it into confrontation with those forces — the popular militia, the block committees — that made the destruction of Somoza possible. The hated National Guard are being pardoned, released and integrated into the new army. By announcing the confiscation of the Somoza family lands the Sandinista Minister of Agriculture, Jaime Wheelock, has given the peasants the signal to satisfy their desperate land hunger at the expense of the big landlords.

The fear on the part of the new government that left wing forces will

gain a sympathetic hearing among the masses is made clear by their rapid expulsion of the USEC's 'Simon Bolivar' Brigade from Nicaragua after they had organised a demonstration against the regime's policies. The cabinet is also set on trying to break the hold of its more radical supporters in the town of Leon.

It is to the conflicts between the workers and peasants on the one hand and the new regime and the other that revolutionaries must direct their intervention. Should the bourgeoisie prove incapable of stabilising the regime then the US imperialists will inevitably resort to armed intervention to protect their interests and their allies.

Only a decisive struggle for workers and peasants power in Nicaragua, a struggle that must break the limits of Balkanised central American nationalisms, can prevent the US imperialists and their local bourgeois agents from reaping the benefits of the blood that has been spilled in the struggle to overthrow Somoza.



Troops Out Now contingent, August 12th demonstration

Front line states are the key to new Tory sell out plan

By Sue Thomas

THE NAUSEATING SPECTACLE of the 'Commonwealth family' at work in Lusaka last month was a salutary reminder of the many weapons and allies that imperialism has at its disposal. Having been warned by the Nigerian nationalisation of BP that Britain and the US could not rely on that country's unswerving loyalty in any recognition of the Muzorewa regime, Thatcher returned to the mainstream imperialist strategy of diplomacy and economic pressure to enforce a 'peaceful' road to stability in southern Africa.

Thatcher was able to turn to the leaders of the front-line states who are in desperate need of a settlement in Zimbabwe. With their economies in permanent difficulty, eager for the reopening of transport links across the continent and wanting further loans and investment from the West, they are keen to show that they can deliver the goods for imperialism. They are worried that a continuation of the anti-imperialist struggle in Zimbabwe could spill over into their own countries thereby encouraging opposition.

Far from being a triumph for Thatcher's delicate approach or for Australian diplomacy, the deal that was stitched up in Lusaka was actively sought by Kaunda and Nyrere. Nor did they break ranks — Neto of

Angola and Machel of Mozambique visited Lusaka a few days before the conference to give their go-ahead to the deal.

conversion

The proposals made at Lusaka are for a constitutional conference to take place in London this month to which all parties will be invited. At this, a plan will be put forward for fresh elections, a new constitution and for Britain to oversee the process. Thatcher's 'conversion' on the question of the constitution cannot have caused her much difficulty — the Commonwealth deal proposes that the white privilege,



Patriotic Front leaders Mugabe and Nkomo

written into the present constitution should be reduced, but not eliminated.

Britain is supposed to oversee the new elections, but, apparently, without a military presence — that would be too clear a demonstration of the imperialist nature of the settlement. But, in that case, what

happens to the Rhodesian forces which so ably determined the course of the last election? The Commonwealth leaders did not demand their disbandment. There are likely to be proposals for some kind of Commonwealth joint force to be present — we should be clear that this will be as much an imperialist force as the British Army itself would be.

In opposition to imperialist conferences where the fate of Zimbabwe will be decided by secret diplomacy, the call must be made for a Constituent Assembly representing all sections of the masses, whose deliberations will be held in open session and whose delegates will be democratically elected and re-callable. In addition there is the need to build workers' and peasants' councils, capable of laying the basis of a new social and political order.

The formation of armed workers' squads, rather than the simple replacement of the Rhodesian army by Patriotic Front regular forces is essential to ensure that these demands are met. Paramount is the need for the formation of a revolutionary communist party, independent of the petit-bourgeois nationalist leaders.

Patriotic Front

The Patriotic Front leaders have maintained a militant verbal posture, condemning the proposals for continued white privilege. Mugabe is calling for the disbanding of the Rhodesian forces and their replacement by the Patriotic Front. ZANU guerillas have been urged to continue the struggle.

However, Mugabe and Nkomo have announced their intention to attend the London talks, pressurised by the front-line states and unwilling to be left out of any deal. Such pressure and a desire to secure their own positions has led them to try diplomatic settlements before and there is every danger of a sell-out in London. The Patriotic Front leaders, while they have to acknowledge the desires of their fighters, are not subject to any democratic control. Only an anti-imperialist movement led by the working class in alliance with the peasantry could exert the necessary control over its representatives. Such a movement would have aims going far beyond that of political independence and the overthrow of white privilege which is the aim of the ZAPU and ZANU leaders, it must aim to destroy capitalism.

urban areas

Left critics of Mugabe and Nkomo have to argue for more than an intensification of rural guerilla warfare. They have to raise the need to take the struggle into the urban areas, to raise demands that meet the needs of workers, peasants and landless labourers — for freedom of political and trade union organisation, for the nationalisation without compensation of major industries, for the breaking of the ties with imperialism.

Front Line

Given the pressure exerted on the Patriotic Front leaders by the front line states, Zimbabwean fighters have to appeal to the workers and peasants in those countries for support. The rewards for good behaviour that imperialism may bestow on these states will not reach the masses. They will be used to strengthen the middle class that is one of the twin bases of support for the ruling groups in those states, the other being imperialism itself. At most a few crumbs will reach skilled workers in an attempt to buy their support for the regimes. Any opposition to the increase in privilege will be met in much the same way as Nyrere met student and worker opposition to Parliamentary and civil service salary increases in 1978 — with attacks on demonstrations, bannings and imprisonment.

The deepening and spreading of the Zimbabwean anti-imperialist movement would also give impetus to workers' struggles in South Africa. If it is not sabotaged at this stage, the Zimbabwean struggle could yet provide the spark that sets alight the whole of the southern half of the continent.

August 12th. shows the potential to build for

TROOPS OUT NOW!

On August 12th over 5,000 marched in London to call for the withdrawal of British Troops from Ireland. This was the largest mobilisation in Britain against the presence of British troops in Ireland since 1972. Over 4,000 of the demonstrators followed the Troops Out Now contingent which contained the majority of Trade Union and Labour Party banners. In contrast, the organisers of the demonstration were only able to pull in behind them the Communist Party, Militant supporters, and five Trade Union and Labour banners.

chauvinist

The march was organised on the basis of calling on the British Government 'to commit itself to a policy of withdrawal'. The sponsors statement of support clearly envisaged a phased withdrawal scheme. The support of the bourgeois Liberals for this initiative comes at a time when small, but significant sections of the British bourgeoisie are considering the option of a gradual withdrawal of troops from Ireland. The statement used chauvinist arguments about the presence of British troops being a burden to the British taxpayer. There was no mention by the sponsors of the specific interests of the Irish people, no mention of the right of the Irish people

as a whole to determine the future of the 6 counties.

scandalous

Nonetheless, the IMG and the SWP were quite prepared to sign this wretched statement even though they are formally committed to self-determination for the whole Irish people and to Troops Out Now. In doing so these 'anti-imperialists' failed to differentiate between those who would wish to preserve the Northern Ireland state, but not at the expense of 'our boys', and those who would correctly view the immediate withdrawal of troops as part of the job of dismantling the Orange state altogether.

It is scandalous that it takes an initiative by the Young Liberals and their hangers-on to bring the Left out in force to demand an end to Britain's occupation of Ireland. Indeed not since the Derry massacre of 1972 has the SWP (IS) turned out approximately 1,000 of their members on a demonstration concerned with Ireland.

Likewise, the United Troops Out Movement (UTOM) has failed to provide any lead. Yet another Troops Out/Irish initiative has been taken out of its hands while it continues to smugly dismiss, as at its last Conference, a prioritised campaign to build a Troops

Out Now current in the organisations of the working class. Without that orientation, the UTOM and its supporters will continue to play second-fiddle to the reactionary and chauvinist bleatings of many of the march's sponsors.

The encouraging, though limited, presence of Trade Union and Labour Party organisations on the march, plus the response, for example, to the May Oxford Labour Movement Conference on Ireland, shows that the basis exists right now to launch a campaign within the organisations of the working class to pull out the Troops. Caucuses must be formed in the Trades Unions, the Trades Councils and the Labour Party in order to commit those bodies, nationally and locally to fight for Troops Out Now. Such a Troops Out current should have its own bulletin, explaining why the workers movement must oppose the presence of British Troops in Ireland and recording the experience of the fight for that position. These tasks cannot be ignored again. Neither can they be left to the Liberals. A fighting Troops Out current must be built which can fight to force the TUC and the Labour Party to break their shameful silence on Ireland and commit them to fighting to end Britain's occupation of Ireland now!

B. McAdam

workers power

Counter Khomeini's coup

KHOMEINI has delivered his long threatened blow against the Left and democratic forces in an attempt to decisively halt the radical element of the Iranian revolution. The yearning for democratic rights, for national freedom and the desire of workers and peasants to enjoy the fruits of their labour and their country's natural wealth was the mainspring of the struggle to overthrow the Shah.

It now threatens Khomeini's reactionary utopia of an Islamic Republic based on the mullah hierarchy

The nationalities had to be terrorised into submission and the independent organisations of the working class had to be crushed. Firstly, the press had to be completely muzzled. Thus Ayandegan, the leading liberal democratic paper on opposition to the mullahs was closed down on August 7th.

The massive demonstration of 60 000, called in protest against this, was set upon by organised gangs well supplied with stones and staves and bicycle chains. The same bands of blackhundreds ransacked the Fedayeen HQ in Tehran and other cities.

Pretext

Khomeini used the pretext of disorder to declare illegal, suppress the newspapers, and order the arrest of the leaders of the radical liberals of the National Democratic Party, the Fedayeen, the Tudeh and force the disbandment/disarming of the radical Islamic Mujahadeen.

This coup d'etat was the prelude to a fanatical all-out assault on the Kurds. Though they are demanding only regional autonomy, their armed militias and organisations are not subject to the central mullah theocracy of Quom or Bazargan's feeble 'Government in Tehran.

Khomeini's assumption of Supreme Command of the Army symbolises his coup which marks the end of the political 'dual power' with the liberal and democratic forces which the Bazargan Government straddled uneasily.

Executive power now resides firmly with the 20 man revolution-

ary council, consisting of Khomeini and other leading figures of the Shia Hierarchy and lay strongmen of the theocratic project, most notably Ibrahim Yazdi (Foreign Minister) and Sadegh Ghotbzadeh (Head of the media). Ayatollah Sadegh Khalkhali, the bloody Inquisitor General of the (counter) revolutionary tribunals' black terror sums up this leaderships' project: "The mullahs staged the revolution and have come to power, and they will stay in power whether the United States or the Soviet Union likes it or not".

Armed gangs

The network of Komitehs plus the heavily armed gangs of ill-disciplined by fanatical pasderan — recruited from the massive, illiterate lumpen proletariat of the cities and officered by Moslem students and sons of the clergy — are Khomeini's chosen instrument for crushing the Left,

His by now famous statement that the mullahs 'made a mistake' and should have "set up gallows in the main squares, cut down all these corrupt people and plotters, declared only one party, that of Allah" is an anachronism with regard to the period February to July. He could not have done this given the still fresh democratic aspiration of the masses, the dissolution of the army, the disarray of the mullahs' own followers.

But Khomeini's statement is the programme for the counter-revolutionary coup d'etat. The profound economic crisis, the mounting discontent provoked among the masses must be turned against the left, against the minority nationalities, against unveiled ('westernised') women and against the liberals.

Hence the Komitehs demagogically claim to speak for the have-nots, the barefoot people — the moustazefin. Their aim is to mobilise mobs of these largely illiterate masses against the privileged, 'westernised' intellectuals, journalists, writers and use them to grind the Left to atoms.

They aim to install a powerful bonapartist regime before the rage of the masses turns on them. Having installed their dictatorial machinery amongst the Turko-

mans in the North and the Arabs in the southern oilfields, Khomeini has declared a holy war against the Kurds. None of these peoples is fighting for separation. All claim merely autonomy ie democratic rights within the Iranian state. But for the mullahs, balancing uneasily atop the masses and unable for much longer to satisfy their most elementary needs, all democratic rights must be crushed.

The Kurds are the best-armed and homogeneous of the Iranian oppressed peoples. It will take more than armed gangs of the enraged lumpen-proletariat of Tehran and Qom to suppress them. For this task the full apparatus of the Shah's army is necessary. To use this effectively discipline must be restored.

The councils that have sprung up in the barracks must be crushed. An operative officer corps and high command is vital to the Iranian ruling class. There has been considerable resistance by troops to being used 'against the people' and refusals to go to Kurdistan. US imperialism must be placated and induced to resume full military and technical co-operation.

Stability

The latter is more than willing to do this providing the stability of the regime is assured. State Department spokesman, Thomas Reston stressed the need for the 'authority and effectiveness' of the central government and though they would obviously prefer to deal with Bazargan, Carter is reported to be pursuing a cautious policy of "stronger support for the theologically driven Khomeini regime" (Newsweek)

Khomeini's Black Hundred rule can obviously be only a transitional one. But its inestimable use is to behead the popular, democratic and anti-imperialist content of the Iranian mass move-

ment against the Shah. When this process is completed a military dictatorship — undoubtedly with an Islamic colouring will be installed. The only force capable of reversing this bloody process is the Iranian proletariat.

Khomeini has not yet dared to openly confront it. The mounting unemployment (some 35% of the active population according to the US Department of Commerce) and economic chaos has seriously weakened its politicisation. Workers Committees still exist in many of the larger factories but they have been penetrated by Islamic agents and threatened by Khomeini with mass sackings if strikes and disturbances go on.

Weakened

The Iranian Left's position is weakened by its previous compromise with Khomeini. The Tudeh — the Iranian CP — backed the Ayatollah uncritically right up to the closure of their newspaper and offices.

The Fedayeen's critical support of Khomeini's anti-imperialist rhetoric despite their courageous support of democratic struggles, also leaves the working masses politically disarmed..

Driven underground, deprived of their press, hunted down by the 'revolutionary guards', the cadres of the Iranian Left must re-assess their parties and groupings crippling political weaknesses if they are to survive to take advantage of the inevitable crisis of the theocracy.

Firstly they must strike deep roots in the proletariat, the factories and oil fields. They must fight for mass action of the workers including the general strike and for a workers militia to defend the organisations of the working class against the attacks of the Komitehs.

Secondly they must break the political umbilical cord with

Khomeini. Their strategic goal must be the armed overthrow of the mullah dictatorship and the installation of a workers government based on workers councils and a workers militia. They must defend the Kurds and pledge to convene a revolutionary constituent assembly which would, once elected by universal suffrage and the secret ballot, meet the democratic demands of the nationalities, the peasantry, women, etc.

Difficult and dangerous as this task is, it will be aided by the economic impasse of the Qom Theocracy, the rebellious state of the army, the nationalities resistance and the restiveness of the Bazaar big bourgeoisie lined up behind Ayatollah Taleghani.

If Khomeini is to placate his bourgeois backers, effect a limited deal with the White House/Pentagon and the deeply resentful Iranian officer caste, he will be increasingly forced to drop his mask of father to the moustazefin (the disinherited).

When the 'loans' to the unemployed have to stop, when the workers committees come under attack, a mighty wave of disillusionment will sweep Iran. For this to find effective leadership an organisation of Iranian revolutionaries will have had to be built even under the terror of the coming months. If it is the "isolated cries" of "Down with Khomeini" reported by Le Monde in the demonstrations of early August, can become a mighty roar — one that can sweep away the Imam and his committees as it swept away the Shah and his American advisors.

D Stocking

Engineering a sell-out



TERRY Duffy never intended to fight the Engineering Employers Federation (EEF) for the engineers full claim. As he put it himself "it is a moderate claim and we are hoping the employers will soon see sense". In June the AUEW National Committee prevented Duffy from accepting a £70 offer.

Despite the feebleness of the £80 a week claim and the weakness of the AUEW leaders campaign of one-day stoppages, the response of the engineering workers has been enough to prevent the AUEW bureaucrats from climbing down immediately.

Unfortunately for Duffy, the EEF has taken his spineless tactics as evidence that it can stand

firm. In doing so, they hope to dent the confidence and fighting ability of all engineering workers. As the EEF put it in a circular to members: "weakness and lack of solidarity now will only encourage more unreasonable claims which will be increasingly difficult to resist."

The employers snub has moved Duffy to militant words . . . "They call me a moderate . . . it is a misnomer, nobody could be more militant than me when I know the cause is right". But it will take more than the stamping of Duffy's little feet to force the employers to back down.

The engineers must win. Their battle is the first major trial of strength between the organised

workers and the Tory Government. Defeat will embolden employers everywhere. But the succession of one and two-day stoppages will not win the claim. The employers are already planning to reply to this action with sackings and lock-outs.

In order to fight for the claim and to protect engineering workers from Duffy's treachery, engineering shop stewards in all areas must meet to prepare an all out stoppage now. Only an all-out engineering strike that does not stop until the full claim for £80 and a 35-hour week now, has been won, can wipe the arrogant and complacent smile off the face of the engineering bosses.

Subscribe to

WORKERS POWER

NAME

ADDRESS

Send £2 to the address below and receive 12 issues of the paper.

Please make cheques or postal orders payable to Workers Power.

Forward to Workers Power, BCM Box 7750, London WC1V 6XX.