

SOCIALIST VIEWPOINT

No. 9. December 1985. 70p



● SOUTH AFRICA: fight for solidarity



● WRP Crisis

● Sinn Fein Ard Fheis ● NHS

About Socialist Viewpoint

THE growing confusion and crisis of the opportunist organisations on the British left has created further splits since our last issue went to press.

One has been among supporters of *Socialist Action*, a paper whose line has epitomised a tendency to view "Marxism" as the art of jumping belatedly onto the bandwagon of struggles already underway, and retailing uncritically the views and policies of the leaderships of those struggles. Now a new magazine, *International*, has set itself the task of breaking from these methods.

The other split has been the even less likely eruption of opposition to former General Secretary Gerry Healy from within the ranks of the Workers Revolutionary Party — resulting in the sensational revelations of Healy's years of personal corruption and brutal attacks on women members, together with his expulsion from the WRP. Since Healy's reign of self seeking and intimidation could not have continued over two and a half decades without the knowledge and complicity of other leading members, his departure has not been followed by any automatic succession: instead the WRP remains a potentially healthy ferment of discussion and investigation of the policies and regime of the Healy years. As one WRP member put it: "The Party now has no established politics". But the task of completing the break from Healyism to revolutionary Marxism, remains an onerous one for those who have survived the trauma so far.

The political background to these splits is one of a mounting witch-hunt against the hard left in the aftermath of the miners' defeat and the Kinnock victories delivered by union block votes at this year's Labour Party Conference. The Tory government, untroubled by fear of serious TUC opposition, is forging ahead with its plans to line the pockets of the rich once again before the next election. It is also using its massive Parliamentary majority to force through a deal with the Irish government designed to reduce dependence on the loyalists while cementing a new alliance against the republican movement.

We have articles on major struggles and developments in

the unions, and on the political evolution of Sinn Fein as shown by its recent Ard Fheis. We also have coverage of the splits in the WRP and *Socialist Action*, and an extended article on the Marxist strategy of Permanent Revolution — a concept central to these splits as well as to the debates on current struggles in Southern Africa and Central America. International coverage includes more analysis on the South African struggle and the fight for working class solidarity, and an assessment of the latest developments in Nicaragua.

Socialist Viewpoint is a magazine committed to the fight for a principled, class struggle programme at every level of the workers' movement in Britain and internationally. We see the fight for Trotskyist politics taking shape not through banner-waving ultimatums, introspective sectarian debates in small groups of would-be gurus, or as simply trailing behind this or that "Left" talking trade union or Labour Party dignitary. Rather it must be a patient fight for the independent interests of the working class, and for demands and action which express those interests, in every arena of the class struggle.

With all too little clarity on offer from the various dogmatic left groupings in Britain, we believe that it is possible and necessary to combine debate with policy and programme.

We are sure our readers will welcome the fact that this magazine is the third to be expanded to include more authors and wider coverage. If you feel — as we do — that it offers excellent value, and politics which represent a break from sectarian posturing and a serious contribution to the class struggle, why not help us sustain and improve it further?

Take a few copies to sell in your workplace, trade union, Labour Party or campaign work. Send us your news and information, articles, cartoons, photos, and letters. Ensure your local activities are publicised on our pages. Check with your local seller or drop us a line for further details.

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Tax cutting screws you up

"OK, SO I do tax-cutting now and again. But I'm not hooked on it. I can stop whenever I want..."

Like bankrupt addicts craving for a fix, rifling their mothers' purses, or stealing on the streets, the Tories are chucking even capitalist caution to the winds in their frenzied efforts for tax cuts next year.

To feed their habit, they are spending money snatched from the unemployed and from pensioners; using money needed for schools, houses and hospitals (which all cost more to build and repair the longer they are left); spending all the billions of North Sea oil revenue; and now grasping for extra billions from the knock-down sale of nationalised industries to business friends and competitors. All this to juggle the books, fix the figures, and make it seem as if the desperate British economy can afford a 5p cut in income tax next year.

Alonside this squalid binge, the Tories have few new political proposals to put forward. Sunday shopping; more laws giving more powers for the cops to harass strikers, demonstrators and youth; and new face-saving laws against drug pushers are the main items in a thin list of projects. The Iron Lady has set herself the simple task of driving the gravy train for the next election, fuelled on the hot air of racism; "law and order"; Victorian "morality"; and, of course, anti-union and anti-socialist rhetoric.

The frantic privatisation of everything that moves has been described by the Earl of Stockton as flogging the furniture to pay the rent. But it is worse than that: sometimes you *have* to pay the rent: nobody *has* to have tax cuts. It is more like selling your car seats to buy new wing mirrors.

The Tories have already presided over what appears to be a terminal decline of British manufacturing industry — turning a £5.5 billion trade *surplus* on manufacturing goods in 1980 into a £4 billion *deficit* by 1984. Between 1980 and 1983 the assets and capacity of manufacturing industry fell by 24%. The production of consumer goods in Britain is still *less* than it was in 1979. The impact of this on the working class can be seen in the vast, unchanging dole queues and the smouldering resentment of our inner cities. The economic cost is over £20 billion in benefits, lost income and lost production each year.

Now the Tories aim to offer more of the same medicine to the state industries — offering them at bargain basement prices to the stock market profiteers, without even the pretence that the result might be any improvement or expansion of the services provided. The first year of the privatised British Telecom — with its colossal profits and huge price increases — shows beyond doubt the miserable prospects for consumers, while workers face a growing threat to jobs and hard-won conditions.

As we predicted, nothing is on offer to the unemployed: the Tories have abandoned any pretence of interest in unemployment. Tax cuts have come and gone before — but unemployment has climbed relentlessly upwards. Anything up to 80% of tax cuts are spent on consumer goods — most of them imported. The Tories' latest panaceas for unemployment are nothing new — a £20 a week subsidy to work for Scrooge employers who pay less than £80 per week; more grants for one-person businesses; more cuts in wages for the lowest paid to "price them into a job"; and a few million pounds to boost tourism. A "fast food" economy, serving burgers and shining the shoes of visting tourists seems the best Thatcher can offer as a hope for the future.

The CBI offers little more: their latest plan sets itself the ambitious target of reducing unemployment to 1 million — *over 25 years!* Needless to say, there has to be a catch in such an attractive scheme: wages must be cut

back. The CBI suggest a plan: over the next 12 months wage settlements should be reduced by 2%. The following year, reduced by another 2%. And so on... Presumably at a certain point, workers begin paying the employers for the privilege of a job!

But it is to the CBI that Roy Hattersley has been turning in his new broad, popular campaign for the "realistic" policies adopted at Bournemouth. Speaking to West Midlands industrialists, he got to his knees and implored them to realise that Labour believes in "the importance of high profits and the need to make those profits more acceptable."

"Although the government will not listen to industry, Labour will," he said.

There is no doubt that — on this if nothing else — Hattersley means what he says. The last Labour government spent far more time listening to the problems of employers than it ever spent listening to workers: Neil Kinnock is planning to do exactly the same again.

Small wonder, therefore, that the other prong to the "Dream Ticket" offensive is to step up the witch-hunt against the left within the party. Using *Militant* as a convenient Aunt Sally for this attack, Kinnock is plainly intent upon clearing the decks of all who oppose grovelling class collaboration.

It is doubtful if he can accomplish the kind of clean sweep he would wish: for all the retreats since the heady left wing resurgence of 1980-81, for all the Livingstone-style capitulations and careerism, there remains a substantial body of Labour members and trade unionists who have rejected the sordid path of the previous Wilson governments, and stood firmly to a working class line through the bitter test of the miners' strike.

It is vital that the same forces now turn to develop the necessary political answers to the "new realism" and the old witch-hunters: it is on their ability to resist challenge and defeat Kinnock's right wing offensive that the next ten years of the British workers' movement depends.

Liverpool: why we don't blame "Militant"

THERE has never been any love lost between our magazine and supporters of *Militant*. We have consistently criticised their role in the Labour Party Young Socialists, in the unions and in the wider Labour Party.

But our differences with *Militant* are very different in character from those raised by Neil Kinnock, the Labour leadership and the trade union bureaucrats who last week descended upon the Liverpool councillors, attempting to bludgeon them into surrender to Tory cash limits.

While Kinnock & Co. attack *Militant* because they are fighting the Tories in Liverpool, we disagree with them on ways of fighting.

So as the Liverpool situation lumbers towards a final showdown, with the council due to run out of money within days of this magazine going to press, we have no doubts which of the two sides should be supported in this dispute — no matter how rotten are some of *Militant's* positions or what stupid tactical moves they may have made during the struggle.

The fact is that while whole sections of Labour's "local government left" has made noises of opposition to ratecapping and other Tory cuts, made gestures of defiance, and more or less timid efforts to involve the trade unions in a fight against the government, Liverpool council has stuck to a policy of *defying* cash limits, *fighting* to defend jobs and services, and *rejecting* the universal fallback of every other struggle — a thumping rate increase.

In taking this stand, the Liverpool councillors — not by any means all of them *Militant* supporters — have gone further than any other Council in winning trade union support and industrial action to back up the fight — and this despite a savage witch-hunt by NUPE, harassment

from the NUT through the courts, and a barrage of hostile press propaganda.

The fact is that Liverpool has been left isolated, and has been driven to the brink of bankruptcy is not the fault of those who have taken a stand upholding the policies on which they were elected. It is the outcome of years of betrayal by "left" councils and the trade union leadership who have time and again ducked a fight, preferring rate increases, cuts and job losses to a confrontation with the government.

Liverpool's struggle took shape during the miners' strike and ratecapping struggle and might — given a lead from the public sector unions — have offered a "second front" of battle against the Tories. Instead the union leaders preferred to betray both the miners and the local government workers.

In a complex struggle, involving all the dark mysteries of local government finance as well as the routine skulduggery of the Labour and trade union bureaucracy, it is hard to predict a sequence of events to follow the near-certain bankruptcy of the council this week. But it is clear which side of the barricades we should take.

Against Kinnock's gang of spineless "New Realists", who raised their "dented shield" symbol of surrender *before* the ratecapping fight even began, and who now seek to exploit the situation to further their witch-hunt, socialists must defend those who decided to stand and fight.

The arguments over *Militant's* politics, and their tactics in any given struggle, should rightly take place within the labour movement as part of a discussion on *how* to fight the Tory attack. Those like Kinnock and the soft left who have already declared their opposition to any fight at all have no valid role in that discussion.



Fowler's stab at unemployed youth

THE single-minded ferocity with which Social Services Secretary Norman Fowler is hounding the young unemployed who claim board and lodgings benefit defies any logical explanation.

Fowler's aim is to turn claimants under 26 who seek board and lodging benefit into permanent nomads, forcing them to move every two, four or eight weeks in order to remain eligible.

● At the end of July these vicious proposals were ruled unlawful in the High Court after causing three months of chaos and heartbreak among claimants. But in a characteristic reprisal against a black couple who won a tribunal appeal for increased benefit following the High Court ruling, Fowler personally intervened to block the extra cash, threatening their eviction and the loss of their MSC training course places.

● A second attempt to smuggle the proposals through the back door of the Commons and Lords statutory instruments Committee in October was rebuffed because of the High Court

ruling. Fowler has not yet put the plans to a vote in Parliament.

● After a third failure, Fowler resolved to table the regulations for debate in the Commons later in November — after which they will come immediately into force.

These and other brutal attacks on the unemployed are forging ahead with little response from the labour movement. The abysmally publicised and poorly-organised October 27 TUC demonstration against the Fowler plans to savage pensions and the social security system symptomised the lack of interest of most union leaders with the problems of claimants and the jobless, and a failure to organise more than a tiny percentage of the millions on the dole.

A feeble turnout — marked by an almost complete absence of union contingents from London itself, and a purely token presence from the TGWU and NUPE in particular — was relieved only by the substantial columns mobilised by the unlikely trio of USDAW, the Tailors and Garment Workers, and the GMBU, and by large numbers of militant pensioners.

If the workers's movement does not address itself to the problems of the

The costs of unemployment

HOW much does unemployment actually cost each year? Government figures have not been published since 1982, so it is left to outside bodies to make informed estimates.

One has been produced by professor Adrian Sinfield and Neil Fraser with help from BBC North East.

This tots up the figures as follows:

● The direct cost of benefits paid out is £1.76 billion in unemployment benefit and £4.6 billion in supplementary and housing benefits. Adjusted to add men over 60, Northern Ireland, and redundancy payments the total comes to £7.4 billion.

● Working on the basis that 3.2 million registered unemployed must mean at least 3.6 million out of work (some of whom do not receive benefits or do not register), they calculate lost Income Tax revenue as £5.7 billion, lost National Insurance at £5.2 billion

and lost indirect taxes from the reduced spending of the jobless at £2.1 billion.

● The totals come to a staggering £20.4 billion each year simply to sustain the army of unemployed. Even this leaves out the loss of possible production and services, and the increased costs to local authorities.

Sinfield and Fraser also underline the ways in which the Tories have tried to recoup some of this lost money directly from the unemployed, by:

● Scrapping in 1982 the Earnings-Related Supplement payable for the first six months of unemployment.

● Phasing out additional unemployment benefit payable for dependent children.

● Taxing unemployment benefit.

But the summer of 1985, therefore, the Tories had cut £500m from benefit expenditure, and recouped a staggering £625m in taxes from the unemployed — cutting 15% from spending even while numbers on the dole have increased by 140%!



On the march on October 27

unemployed, recruit and organise unemployed youth and adult workers, the prospects of forging the necessary alliance against Tory policies is constantly undermined.

Every union branch, Labour Party and Trades Council can begin now to play a role in reversing this situation, by taking up the fight for the organisation of the unemployed.

• Demand rule changes where necessary — or implement existing rules to recruit unemployed workers

at minimal subscriptions with full rights to speak and vote.

• Launch publicity campaigns, leafletting, meetings, estate canvasses, urging the unemployed to join appropriate unions, and suggesting items — subsidised travel, other facilities, campaigns against harassment, etc., which can be taken up by the labour movement. Urge the unemployed to make their own proposals. Go to the unemployed: don't wait for them to come to the unions!

THE poorest paid workers have suffered worst under Tory rule. Latest figures show that since 1979 the average earnings of the bottom 10% in the pay league have fallen 5% behind the 74.6% increase in prices. These figures are pre-tax, and ignore the fact that rising prices hit the low paid proportionately far harder than those at the top of the scale.

The top 10% on the other hand

enjoyed rises worth 101.2% over the same period — 26% above inflation — and also benefitted most from the various tax cuts.

Yet it has been the lowest paid who have suffered most from the 140% rise in unemployment since 1979 and the trebling of youth unemployment. This gives the lie once again to the Tory notion that high wages "price workers out of a job".



Unholy alliance against Scargill

By ALAN THORNETT

ARTHUR Scargill has been dragged back into the courts and forced to purge the NUM's "contempt" of court because they refused to accept a High Court

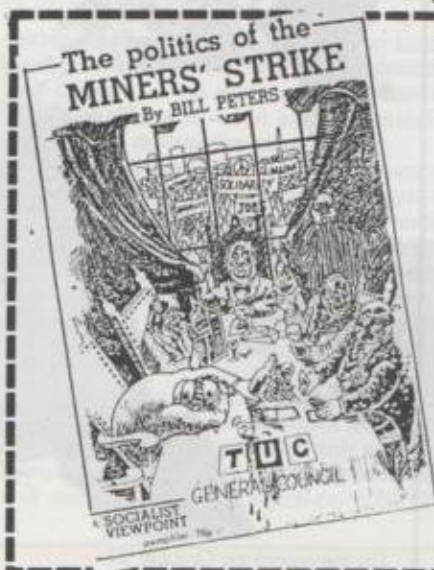
ruling that the miners' strike was "unofficial". It provided the opportunity for the Judges to ridicule the trade union movement and brag about "the rule of law" being upheld.

But the responsibility for this situation does not lie with Scargill. He led the first great challenge to mass

unemployment and in the course of it confronted the full force of Tory anti-union legislation. He, like the striking miners themselves, can hold his head high in the knowledge that he fought an uncompromising fight until the end. He and the miners were betrayed by the TUC and let down by those unions best placed to break the isolation the NUM found itself in a few months into the strike.

Failure to back the miners, and win the strike has now linked into a swing to the right within the trade union and labour movement. Neil Kinnock never misses a chance to attack Scargill in increasingly vitriolic terms. Principles are thrown to one side. The employers and the Government offensive against the working class is forgotten. Everything must be subordinated to winning the next election and the road to this is seen as a wholesale shift to the right.

This has led to the increasing isolation of Scargill and the left within the unions and the TUC. The miners demonstrated the fighting ability of the working class and showed that the Tories can be beaten if a fighting unity can be forged within the trade union movement. But the conclusion drawn by the vast majority of trade union leaders is that it was *wrong* to



New!

Perhaps the first attempt at an objective and coherent political analysis of the miners' strike and its lessons for the workers' movement. 44 pages, 80p, including postage, from *Socialist Viewpoint*, BCM Box 3956, London WC1N 3XX.

have fought; that it proves that their normal policy of compromise was right all along.

Unfortunately this dangerous doctrine is being increasingly accepted on all levels within the movement. The Communist Party for example, is at the centre of it. They talk openly about the "necessity" of isolating the "Bennite left" in the unions and getting together with groupings like the Tribunites and the Labour Coordinating Committee.

The far left, by and large, is not accepting the argument, but it is conceding the situation. The Socialist Workers Party has dropped the victimised miners for other pastures. The Support Groups have declined, although determined groups of activists keep them going in many areas, maintaining links with the NUM and supporting the victimised miners. This turn away from the miners by sections of the far left has made it easier for the right wing to take the initiative.

Nor is this slide to the right excluded from the NUM itself. There, the "success" of the scab UDM is exaggerated by the right wing in order to put pressure on Scargill. In reality the UDM has not broken out of the scab pits and has had a hard job getting a majority in some of those despite an openly biased media and the full support of the NCB manipulating the wage review to give Lynk the advantage.

Despite this there is a widespread movement amongst Area officials and others to undermine Scargill as President. This was reflected in the NEC vote to force him into the Court to purge the "contempt" of the union.

It is important for militant miners to defend Scargill and defend the NUM. Any move against him would make conditions in the industry far worse, and would prolong the vital task of rebuilding the fighting capacity of the NUM.

Now the TUC General Council is preparing a wholesale collapse in front of the AUEW and the EEPTU over money for strike ballots without even a recall of the Congress. The proposal is that the Government send the money direct to the TUC and they allocate it to the individual unions. Such a collapse, whilst predictable, would represent a further substantial shift to the right.

To combat the retreat, the task of the militants in the NUM is to rebuild the fighting capacity of the union, which means in the short term the reorganisation of the left and developing a fight around the pits faced with closure. A number of pits have taken a decision to resist closure: Mardy and St John's in South Wales, Bold in Lancashire and Darfield Main and Fryston in Yorkshire.

Most of these have begun various campaigns against closure — appealing for public support for their cases.

NCB policy is to offer vast increases in productivity for keeping the pit open. They have declared that



any pit unable to produce coal for less than £42 per tonne in the short term and £38 in the longer term will be closed. Some pits fall into this trap by arguing their own potential profitability and in some cases even offering higher productivity.

Public campaigns are important, and the confidence of the miners can be raised in that way; but no closure

of a pit or a factory has ever been ultimately prevented by a public campaign but only by direct action: either occupations or strikes.

It is self evident that pits faced with closure cannot fight against it alone. Support has to be generated throughout the coalfield towards a strike decision of an area conference when closure decisions go ahead.

More valuable
than
gold



by Striking Miners' Children

A new booklet of poems, prose and drawings by miners' children about the Great Strike of 1984-5 is now available: proceeds from sales go to Women Against Pit Closures. The booklet is £1.50 plus postage from MUTG, 10, West Bank, London N16 5DG. (Cheques payable to "More Valuable Than Gold").

Reviving struggle in Yorkshire coalfield

By PAUL HUBERT

ALTHOUGH it is now nearly 9 months since the end of the miners' strike, in Yorkshire it continues to reverberate. The programme of pit closures about which Arthur Scargill warned has advanced, if not at the speed at which it would have done without the strike.

Unfortunately at Corton Wood, the pit where the strike began, the NUM lodge became demoralised and the pit is now shut and at other pits miners have felt that it was impossible to avoid conceding redundancies. It's no longer front page news - but every day more miners are going out of the gate for the last time.

In this gloomy picture there are one or two bright spots. Darfield Main, one of the pits now threatened, is at the centre of a strong campaign. Fryston in the North Yorkshire area have recently voted to contest the closure of their pit. And although the level of activity is by no means so high, some of the Women's Support Groups and other organisations which came out of the strike are still very active.

The Miners Campaign Group '85 is one such organisation. Based in the North Yorkshire and Barnsley areas, it has been maintaining the links between militants in different pits which were forged during the strike. As many of the full-time officials have become secretive and bureaucratic since the decline of the strike, the flow of information between different pits and areas through such unofficial channels is vital and has enabled the rank and file to have an independent input into meetings and demonstrations through leaflets. The Group leafleted the TUC Congress over the amnesty issue.

At the present time even militant branches fighting the closure of their own pit can have few illusions that an all-out strike could start in the same way it did before. This has led some to hope that it is possible to win something through the colliery review procedure. On the face of it a pit like Fryston would seem to have a good case. Men have been transferred there from other pits which have been closed, such as Savile, with the promise that the pit has years of coal left.

However the reasons that the NCB chokes to close one pit rather than another may have very little to do with coal. Just down the road from Fryston is another pit, Wheldale, where it has been accepted that the future is shorter. Yet Wheldale is not currently threatened with closure. The determination of the board to see Fryston closed means that the review procedure will be ignored if that is all that stands between the pit and closure.

The reason for NCB hostility against Fryston is that it was a hotbed of



militancy during the strike. In many other pits even "left" leaders were a rein on militancy. For example, elsewhere in the North Yorkshire area is Kellingley, one of the largest pits in Europe. It has Communist Party members in the branch leadership and by the end of the strike there were 1,000 men scabbing, part of the reason for which was that the officials gave the activists the runaround.

At Fryston the leadership really acted as a leadership. The branch president, Roy Wright, did time in jail for his pains as the victim of a nationally publicised frame-up.

A scab at Fryston called Michael Fletcher was beaten up. Twenty-eight miners from the branch faced charges and special measures designed to take them out of the struggle. First came time on remand in jail and then exile. Roy Wright was forced to live in Southport while others were sent to

places like Hull. Twenty-six of those people are now able to go back to what passes for a normal life after such a disruption.

As in many other "riot" trials the charges collapsed for lack of evidence when finally brought before a court - but by then they had served the purpose of keeping militants out of the struggle until the strike was over. Even the two who were found guilty of causing grievous bodily harm were only convicted on the basis of confessions and pleas of guilty.

In Leeds, four of us who were not miners were given a graphic insight into the pressures faced by the strikers. Socialist Viewpoint supporters managed to get the District Labour Party to organise pickets in support of the miners at Leeds-area pits. At first our "friendly, tame" West Yorkshire Metropolitan Police treated these pickets with care but as the end of the strike neared they became more and more forceful in response.

At a rather subdued picket at Savile in February the four of us were arrested for no particular reason except that we were there and the police hoped that we were students. As one of them wittily put it before driving us off to the police station, "Police 4 - Students Nil".

Before we were released we were all charged with "threatening, insulting or abusive behaviour liable to cause a breach of the peace". In addition one of the others was charged with assault on a police officer in the course of his duty while I was charged with 3 assaults and criminal damage to a police raincoat.

The police story was so fraudulent that Wetherby magistrates were unable to swallow it all and settled when the 3-day trial drew to an end for 3 convictions on the breach of the peace charges. With two of the others I was fined £125 and bound over for a year.

Hopefully few people in the Labour Party accept the case for pit closures. However, my own case has given me an even stronger feeling about the necessity for continuing to press the case for an amnesty and reimbursement of the miners and their union.

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Oxford Miners Support Group



Welsh quarry strikers revive spirit of 1900

FIVE months after striking coal miners returned to work in Clwyd, slate quarry workers in neighbouring Gwynedd came out on strike and have been out for 4 months.

The dispute, in the Blaenau Ffestiniog area, involves T&GWU workers, employed by three different companies and was sparked off by attempts by the management of one of them, the Ffestiniog Slate Co., to end bonus payments. This would have meant a loss of between £25-30 a week in wages for the quarryworkers.

As a result of these attempts workers from all three companies decided that from 19 August they would work to rule. This action led to directors in one of the companies, Cwt y Bagail, sending the men home. Members from the other two companies walked out in sympathy. A ballot later voted unanimously to continue the strike.

The struggle has been maintained with the support of the Blaenau Ffestiniog community and its efforts to appeal for help from elsewhere. This support is needed, since it took George Wright, the Welsh TGWU's version of Gavin Laird, over 5 weeks to recognise the dispute as official. The continuation of the strike has many advantages which the North Wales miners did not have — firstly most of the quarryworkers live in the small area of Blainau — they are therefore not isolated during the strike. Secondly, workers in the Gwynedd slate industry are both aware and proud of their history of militancy (for

By YVONNE CONWAY

example, neither strikers nor scabs have been forgotten from the great 3 year strike of Bethesda quarrymen in 1900-03). At a recent rally for the strikers, a number of references were made to the 1900 strike.

A Blaenau Women's Support Group has been set up — mainly consisting of wives and partners of the strikers but also of women who were in the Blaenau Miners' Support Group. They, along with the strike committee, have appealed for and found support from a number of sources: South Wales miners, whom they supported during their recent strike; from North Wales Miners' Support Groups; the Labour Party (though interestingly enough *not* from the local Labour Party branch); from Welsh republicans; from other individual trade unionists and from students in the Gwynedd area.

But support from TGWU officials in Wales as a whole has been very poor. For example not one single TGWU official in Clwyd has so much as publicised the slate workers' case, much less given concrete support.

The most hard-nosed, fiercely anti-trade union boss in the dispute, E. Williams, who has so far even refused to speak to the strikers, is an active member of Plaid Cymru. Letters from Dafydd Ellis Thomas, Plaid's President, to Williams have as yet received no reply. The strikers' determination to continue their struggle, despite difficulties, stems from a fear that if they give in to a loss of bonus payments, it will open the flood gates to a continued worsening of their working conditions and an assault on union rights.

They are only too aware of how bravely and bitterly fought was the battle to win union recognition and improvements in the quarries' working conditions. It took three major strikes, including the 3 year stoppage at Bethesda, to gain the right to be trade union members, against ruthless bosses and despite a very conservative leadership of the old North Wales Quarrymen's Union.

Indeed the parallels with earlier struggles in the quarries are very striking. Those struggles took place in a climate where the fear of unemployment loomed large and was a powerful weapon for the bosses.

After the end of the union recognition struggles of 1874-1903, the workforce had dropped from 16,000 in 1898 to 8,000 by 1914. Also it was other trade unionists and the community who sustained those strikes — not the union leaderships. A huge total for those days of £3,921 was collected in the Welsh communities at home and in America for the union recognition struggles. Some of this was donated to South Wales miners then on strike.

This connection still exists today.

Whilst the early struggles are remembered, the quarry workers have no intention of reliving the agonies of working in 19th century conditions. The continued support by other workers is vital for the continuation of the strike, as is pressure on TGWU officials in particular to spread support for the strike throughout the union.

Donations and messages of support can be sent to:

Ffestiniog Quarrymen's Dispute Fund,
TGWU District Office, 17, Segontium Terrace, Caernarfon, Gwynedd.



Wrexham demonstration to support the Gwynedd strikers

Keith Joseph shuffles the Burnham pack

RECENTLY there have been several significant developments in the teachers pay campaign.

Teachers pay is negotiated through the Burnham Committee — a body made up of representatives of local authorities, the DES, and the teaching unions. The union side is known as the teachers panel, and representation is supposedly based on membership figures for each association. The allocation of seats on the panel lies with the DES and its minister, Sir Keith Joseph.

Joseph has used a change in membership numbers to remove the majority of the largest teachers union, the NUT. The NUT has been seen as the most "militant" in this year's salaries campaign. Although the NUT is still the largest teaching union, it no longer has an overall majority of teachers in England and Wales.

The Burnham Teachers Panel now consists of 13 NUT representatives, 7 NAS/UWT, 4 AMMA, 2 NAHT, 1 SHA, 1 PAT. NATFHE previously had one voting seat, but have now been reduced to non voting "observer status".

The Headteachers associations are over-represented on the panel in relation to their membership figures. If the NUT had the same representation proportionally as the SHA, there would be 54 NUT representatives on the committee!

Joseph is indeed fortunate: how many other industries or professions allow management to select who they wish to negotiate with — especially half way through a set of negotiations!

The re-allocation of seats has, however, saved the NUT leadership's bacon. The NUT's campaign, far from being "militant" has, by and large, been weak, disjointed and far behind the rising militancy of its membership.

On the positive side, the campaign has seen the demand of "no day, no cover" implemented (refusing to substitute, or cover, for colleagues on the first day they are absent), and strike action has taken place without strike pay (or "sustentation". By rule, the NUT has to pay full strike pay when members are called out. Serious national action — or even protracted local action in several areas — becomes a massive drain on a strike fund which has been "raided"

By JIM TURNER



Marches — no substitute for all-out action

time and time again for other purposes by the NUT National Executive.) Both these steps have been in response to massive pressure from the membership, and reflect the campaign waged by the left in the NUT over the last 15 years.

Indeed the "militancy" of the NUT leadership is almost entirely imaginery, and has been built up by the press. They have described the NUT as the "NUM of the teaching profession" and even compared its General Secretary, Fred Jarvis, as being the dispute's Arthur Scargill!

With the re-allocation of Burnham teachers' panel seats, and loss of direct control, the NUT leadership can engage in its traditional pursuit — pinning the blame on someone else.

In this instance the NAS/UWT (National Association of Schoolmasters/Union of Women Teachers — the smaller TUC affiliated teaching union) have conveniently obliged by deciding to ballot on acceptance of an "interim" settlement for 1985, while declaring their intention to fight for a 35% increase... next year!

This will come as no surprise to most teachers. The NAS/UWT leaders have shown a willingness throughout the campaign to trade off

conditions of service against a pay increase, and have, if anything, shown even less of a desire for a genuine campaign than the NUT leadership.

Whilst the NAS/UWT leaders pay lip service to the restoration of Houghton pay levels established in the mid 1970s (teachers' salaries have dropped by 34% over the last ten years), they have never accepted that restoration should be on *present* conditions of service. In essence they agree with *more work* for a Houghton pay level. Their "interim" settlement fools no one, least of all the employers. The NAS/UWT position merely signals to the employers that they can continue to make pay offers around the rate of inflation (or just below!) and have them accepted. Talk of restoring Houghton levels becomes just that — talk.

All the signals are that the NUT and NAS/UWT leaderships are prepared for a war of words over the settlement — a tactic guaranteed to set the respective memberships at each others throats, rather than at the employers, or the respective union leaderships!

The NUT must reject the moves for settlement from other associations on the teachers panel, and step up its action.

NAS/UWT members should vote to reject the position put by their leadership — a betrayal of the last nine months action and the principles behind it. If NUT members also reject the crude membership war which Jarvis seems intent on carrying out, the basis still exists for active unity of the rank and file of both unions.

Valuable lessons could be learned from this. A debate has recently been initiated in the journal of the Socialist Teachers' Alliance, *Socialist Teacher*, around the question of a single TUC-affiliated union for teachers. Ken Jones, an STA member who is also a member of the NUT National Executive, argues that changes in the nature of the teaching force and the loss of the NUT's overall majority on Burnham makes this unity a necessity.

This debate can take in a long needed discussion on the nature of the Burnham Committee itself.

It is clearly important to maintain the principle of national negotiations — but now more than ever (and not before time) teachers are questioning the Burnham structure, and the authority of the D.E.S. to determine who it negotiates with.

Silentnight strike

Bed firm workers wake up to union struggle

By JACK SHARPLES

THE owner of the Silentnight bedding firm, Mr Tom Clarke, has a shareholding worth over £7m and personal wealth exceeding £50m. He started up in business on his demob pay, making mattresses in his front room and eventually built up a large factory in Barnoldswick, Lancs., and has since expanded by buying up other companies. When Mrs Thatcher visited the Silentnight showrooms about 15 months ago she christened Clarke "Mr Wonderful", expressing her admiration for the man and holding him up as an example to the rest of British industry.

Just why she thinks he is so wonderful has become clear. About three years ago Clarke told the local press that he had the best workforce in the country. This was part of an article reporting yet another record-breaking profit by Silentnight. That same workforce has now been sacked.

The turnover of workers has been very low in that intervening period. The only difference is that the workforce has now become unionised.

Historically, the annual pay rise at the Silentnight factory in Barnoldswick has since 1978 been

accompanied by a change in job values which has virtually wiped out the cost of the pay rises. After such a rate cutting exercise in February 1984 the workforce decided as a body that for once they were not going to accept, and a walkout resulted. On the morning of the walkout there were about 20 members of FTAT (Furniture, Timber and Allied Trades Union) at the factory. By the end of the day there were over 600, and Barnoldswick has been unionised ever since.

The current dispute has arisen because of management's desire for a confrontation. In December 1984, 88 employees were declared redundant. At the beginning of 1985 the Company gave a guarantee that no further jobs would be lost if the workers accepted a postponement of their nationally negotiated wage increase for a period of three or

four months. The workers agreed — yet just 8 weeks later, another 52 redundancies were announced. As the management had reneged on their side of the bargain, the workers pressed for the implementation of the pay award. The management refused.

Tom Clarke sacked the manager who had made the "no redundancies" deal and offered an increase to be offset against bonus earnings so that it only applied in respect to time-rate working. As most Silentnight workers are payment-by-result workers, the effect was that the majority would get little or no increase at all. A secret ballot was held on industrial action and resulted in a 354-203 majority in favour of a work to rule. The workers in one department were then suspended and on June 10 the remainder took strike action in support of those members. On July 22, 523 workers were sacked!

The Silentnight workers are very bitter about the way in which management tried to dupe them. They were not a political workforce and they were in good faith attempting to "help the company out" by foregoing their pay rise. They now know that this was wrong. People like Tom

**FORWARD TOGETHER ~
ALWAYS TOGETHER**



**support the Silentnight
workers**

FTATU

Clarke use the workers to push through not only more profits for themselves but also the Tory dream of lower wages for all workers.

This week CBI leader Sir Terence Beckett made a vicious attack on the working class and told employers not to award annual pay rises, saying that they should implement the old Yorkshire saying of "nowt for nowt". Of course at the same time these very same employers modelled on Tom Clarke will be speeding up line rates and pushing for more productivity.

The American model of wages and work is rapidly being pushed for here in Britain. In America wages are often negotiated only every three or four years and now the negotiations are about how little will be cut rather than how much more workers will get. Relative to the price of capital costs American wages were 37% lower in 1983 than they were in 1972. Profits however of the major companies continue to rise. Tom Clarke is no ordinary small business person. He is a leading Tory backed by the Tories and determined to smash the working class.

Although Silentnight have a major influence in the National Bedding Federation the management refused to use the established disputes procedure as specified in Clause 24 of the National Labour Agreement of the Bedding and Mattress Manufacturing Trade. After two abortive meetings with representatives of ACAS the company have refused to accept any form of conciliation and arbitration. Almost six months later the strike still continues.

Tom Clarke has, on numerous occasions, let it be known that he is anti-union. His action even led to him being removed by the police for provocative behaviour after he made abusive gestures to pickets at the factory gate. Mr Clarke is, incidentally, Chair of the local Conservative Party! Since the strike began, profits have slumped from £5.2 million to £1.5m, yet dividends have remained the same at £1.2m — of which the Clarke family have claimed £644,771. This sum alone is three times the cost of the union pay claim!

On the "Diverse Reports" programme featuring the strike, shop steward Janet Seymour was quoted as saying "Clarke and MacGregor are Maggie Thatcher's knife and fork! She moves her arms and they carve us up!" This analogy with the miners' dispute is further strengthened by correspondence which has recently surfaced.

In 1979, Ken Murray, then the Joint Group Manager for Silentnight Holdings Ltd, wrote to the Tory MP for Pendle, John Lee. His letter reads:

"One thing I would like to comment on is the apparent lack of urgency in withdrawing payments to the families of strikers... the lack of finance available to the families of moderates would help stiffen their resolve to get back to work and influence the militants ... from a strategic point of view this particular move could very well be taken earlier rather than later."

John Lee replied:

"You're absolutely right, we must get throughout more controversial legislation in the early stages of this parliament... I take your point about the withdrawal of payments to the families of strikers."

John Lee, formerly parliamentary consultant to the National Bedding Federation and now an Under Secretary for Defence, owns 2,000 shares in Silentnight. The workers have asked for his help, but, not surprisingly, none was forthcoming.

This strike is a major political battle. The dispute over pay rises is no longer important. It is now about the right to belong to a trade union and this was reflected in the unanimous votes of support passed at TUC and Labour Party Conferences. However, FTAT officials have tried hard to contain the strike to avoid any danger of confronting the anti-trade union legislation.

Nevertheless, boycotting of Silentnight products has occurred at Hull and other ports especially in Ireland. The Co-op, who are the largest customers for Silentnight beds, have frozen orders. Such solidarity action is beginning to bite hard but the action needs to be extended. Few of the strikers are experienced trade unionists and it has taken time for the limitations of the full time officers to become apparent. In fact it was only when local "Militant" supporters started producing a weekly bulletin that the union responded with information of its own. No mass meetings have been held for months but the workers remain firm and continue to develop links throughout the country by extensive speaking tours.

The strike has catapulted the workers overnight into the political arena. They have taken many of the parallels of the miners' strike and used them. A Women's Support Group has been set up in Barnoldswick and Sutton to support both the women strikers and the partners of male strikers. For most of the women involved it is their first industrial action.

The support group is also very important because the strikers are mainly men (a reflection of the make up of the workforce) and without the support of other women the women strikers could easily be left to take a back seat. One of the leading figures in the strike, Janet Seymour, has travelled all over the country talking at meetings, demanding support from Labour politicians at Conference, and col-

lecting funds for the strike committee. She says that she never dreamed a year ago that she would be doing this.

Another woman who came down to London to address some meetings had never been out of Lancashire before! There are some forms of communal childcare which have started since the strike and which have begun to allow both men and women to fit in their domestic chores with their picket duties.

As is always the case when women take strike action there are also problems with the men who are not used to their partners not being there and the meal not being cooked! The women are working these things out together and are determined that come what may they will not abandon the strike.

The Asian workers are also now working with a number of black activists in London and this marks a big step forward in terms of the politics of the strike.

However, the silence from the trade union and Labour Party bureaucracy remains. After the defeat of the miners' strike, the last thing that Willis, Kinnock and their friends want is class confrontation against one of Maggie's boot-boys. A victory at Silentnight would, however, be a massive morale booster for trade unionists everywhere.

Only if the support, both financial and physical, is stepped up can this happen. This strike has many similarities to Grunwick and even the NGA dispute at Warrington. The FTAT leadership needs to be forced to mobilise the same sort of support that those disputes received. The right to belong to a trade union is what is at stake and no excuses can be accepted for the isolation of the Silentnight strikers.

Donations of food and money should be sent to:

Cravendale Branch 92 Strike Fund, c/o Ann King, 10 Rainhall Crescent, Barnoldswick, Colne, Lancashire.

Hands off Guillermo Lora!

VETERAN Bolivian Trotskyist Guillermo Lora has fallen victim of the country's singularly anti-democratic electoral laws.

For the July general elections the Bolivian National Electoral Court decided that any parties receiving less than 50,000 votes would be liable to a fine of US\$7,000.

The court was controlled by former military dictator Hugo Banzer and the man who has since become President, Victor Paz Estenssoro of the bourgeois Revolutionary Nationalist Movement (MNR); they were at the time predicted to be the two front runners in the poll.

Lora however stood as presidential candidate on behalf of the Workers Revolutionary Party (POR), using the election as a platform for revolutionary propaganda and exposure of the electoral law. He received less than 50,000 votes.

The Paz Estenssoro government,

however, ran immediately into opposition from the militant Bolivian trade union movement, who staged a 16-day general strike against his heavy handed austerity plan to deal with Bolivia's huge economic crisis. The plan included a wage freeze and a 95% devaluation of the peso in a bid to cut the 14,000% inflation rate. The strike was met by military repression and the arrest of thousands of workers and union leaders.

In the aftermath of that strike, Lora has been singled out for legal action, with the government demanding he pay the \$7,000.

The POR has launched an international appeal to raise this sum of money, which is enormous in the context of Bolivia.

Donations are invited to be sent to: Juan Pablo Bacherer, c/o G. Böhr, Våktarsatan 30-D, 754 22 Uppsala, Sweden.

Why Thatcher backs apartheid

AS WE went to press last month Commonwealth leaders were confidently predicted to be press-ganging Thatcher into sanctions — or forging ahead regardless.

The result of course was very different: far from being dragged along by the team of horses, Thatcher dug in her heels and pulled them back in her direction — exploiting the fact that without British support any package of Commonwealth sanctions against South Africa would be an obvious farce.

A swaggering Thatcher boasted that "They've joined me now," and that she had moved "just a tiny tiny bit." The "sanctions" decided upon were irrelevant and insignificant: and she went further, announcing that whatever happens over the next six months before the policy is reviewed, she will still oppose any sanctions then.

Why has she taken such a tenacious stand in opposition to government economic sanctions? The answer is not complicated — £5,000,000. That is the size of British capitalism's annual trade surplus with South Africa, at a time when the British economy is in a major deficit on non-oil trade.

On top of this British capitalism last year sold "invisible" financial and insurance services to South Africa totalling £1.3 billion.

And of course there is the direct British investment, amounting to 40% of the £12 billion total of foreign investments in South Africa, plus another £6 billion of indirect investments (coins and shareholdings).

It is this big money — producing higher rates of return than comparable investment in Britain — which has shaped the foreign policy of the Thatcher government on South Africa, and would play a big role



in deciding the attitude of a Kinnock government if it came to the crunch.

Small wonder Thatcher now *denies* that apartheid is to blame for the violent struggles in South Africa and seeks to emphasise the nit-picking "reforms" carried out by the Botha regime!

Small wonder she and Sir Geoffrey Howe have taken up the demand that while Botha guns down defenceless children, students and workers on the streets, wielding whips, batons and teargas, the liberation movement and the ANC in particular should "renounce violence".

The list of meaningless commitments from Nassau is quite long — several simply reiterate existing UN embargoes and policies.

- A ban on new government loans to South Africa — but of course most loans are private bank loans anyway, in which British banks will remain central.
- Take "what action may be possible" to stop the import of Krugerrands.
- No government funding for trade missions to South Africa — while the missions will go ahead (including one from Leeds).
- A ban on the sale of computer equipment suitable for military or police use in South Africa — yet much of this has already been supplied by British firms.
- A ban on the export of nuclear goods and technology.



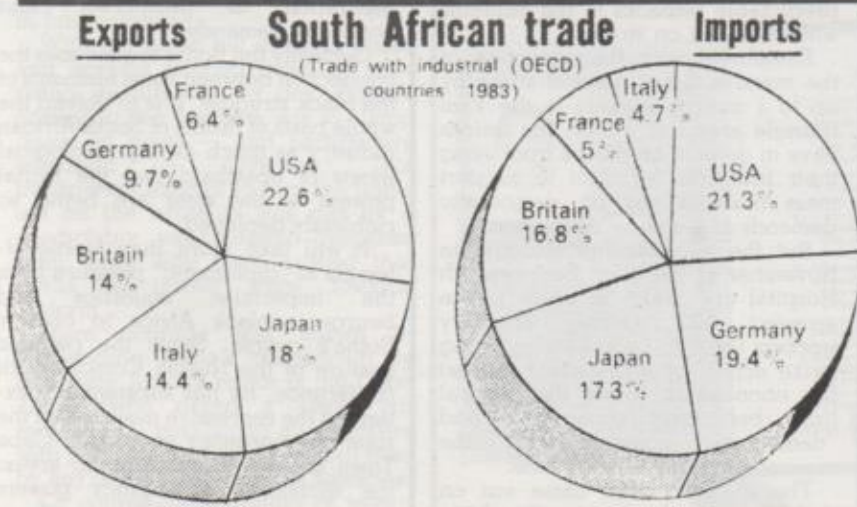
- A ban on the sale and export of oil.
- An embargo on imports of arms and military equipment from South Africa.
- An embargo on all military cooperation with South Africa.

Thatcher's "tiny, tiny" concessions on sanctions were welcomed by Neil Kinnock but condemned as inadequate by the Liberals and by the SDP.

Within days of the announcements, the South African regime had thumbed its nose to Commonwealth leaders and signalled its appreciation of Thatcher's stand by extending the dictatorial state of emergency restrictions to cover one third of South Africa's population, and imposing rigid press censorship on reportage of black struggles.

To imagine that Thatcher's unyielding stance in defence of the profits of British bankers and multinationals will be altered by petitions, protests and pressure politics would clearly be naïve in the extreme. As a consciously imperialist government the Tories are defending their system in the old fashioned way.

The British workers' movement, however, has the power and the possibility to take action that could cut the flow of trade and lend direct solidarity to the struggles of their black brothers and sisters in South Africa.



Link the struggles against Botha!

By HARRY SLOAN



Recession raises struggle for jobs and wages

A DEEP economic recession is now playing a role in the escalation of the crisis of the apartheid regime in South Africa.

Unemployment has more than doubled in twelve months; the rand is low in value against other currencies; inflation is eroding already pitiful pay packets; and the profits of retailers and consumer goods firms are plunging, while interest rates remain high.

The consequence is that the economic demands of South Africa's black working class must increasingly merge with the mass demands for sweeping democratic changes to break down the racist apartheid state.

So far the mass struggles on the streets against Botha's hired killers have remained largely isolated from large-scale industrial action. The recent miners' strike was deliberately restricted by union leaders to a wages-only struggle, and confined to only a handful of "selected" mines — a suicidal tactic which brought predictable setbacks to the militants who came out on strike.

Elsewhere, with the exception of the massive 2-day general strike by up to 1 million workers in the Vaal triangle area last winter, the unions have in general held back from using their industrial strength to support mass mobilisations on democratic demands and against repression.

But the explosion of struggle in November at the giant Baragwanath Hospital in Soweto, in which police arrested 600 striking ancillary workers (only to provoke supporting strike action by 800 student nurses) has once again shown the integral link between "economic" and "democratic" demands in the repressive South African state.

The ancillary staff came out on strike for a pay increase — they have not had a rise since 1983. When they

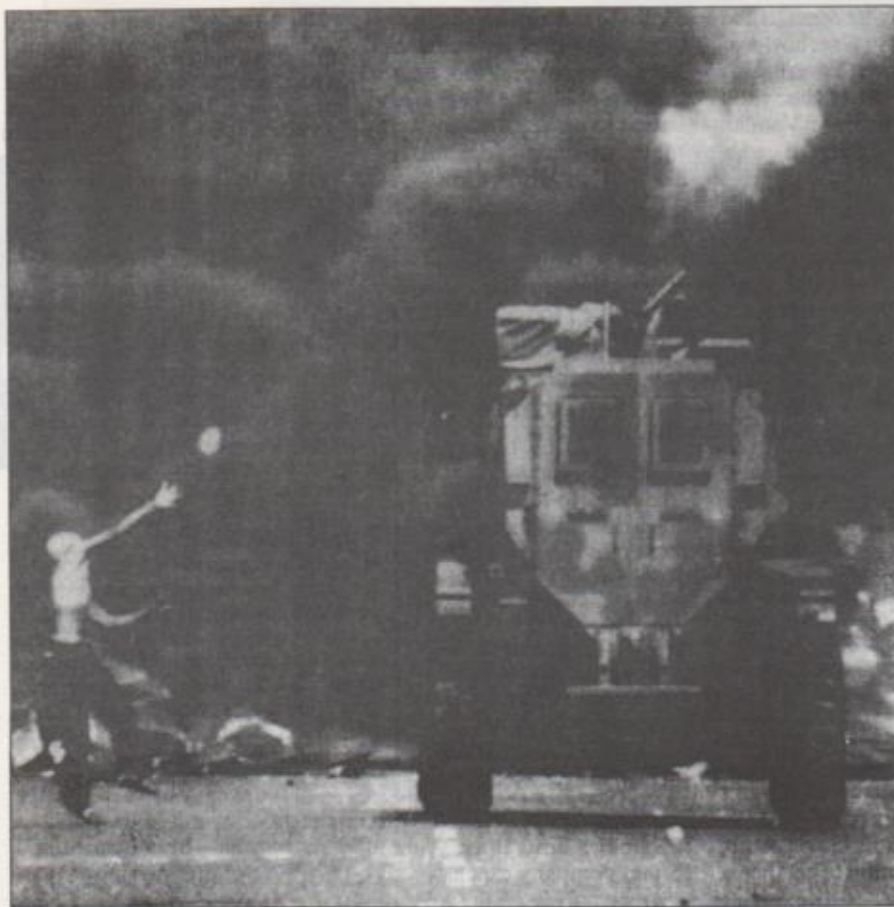
were subjected to mass arrest, and an 8pm curfew was imposed upon nursing staff to contain the situation, hundreds of nurses demonstrated. When baton-charged by cops, they counter-attacked and drove back the police!

The student nurses then refused to work or attend classes: they are also demanding the recognition of their union, the Health Workers Association, and the ancillary workers' union, the General and Allied Workers Union (GAWU). Management immediately announced the sacking of all 1,800 strikers — but the nurses refused to accept pay-off cheques. Ancillary workers were marched off the premises at gunpoint by police, while troops were brought in to cover the work of strikers.

In a country where a simple pay claim can explode this easily into a full confrontation with the armed bodies of the state, there can be no separation of democratic and economic demands.

Certainly the Botha regime sees the connection between these elements of the black struggle. It is to defend the whole basis of profits of South African industry as much as any ideological tenets of apartheid that the brutal powers of the state are being so ruthlessly deployed.

It will take more than feeble attempts at "diplomatic" pressure from the imperialist countries and bourgeois black Africa to change Botha's course. Since the pathetic gesture of the Nassau Commonwealth conference, he has substantially extended the repressive measures of the state of emergency to include Cape Town and seven surrounding areas: the dictatorial emergency powers now cover over 9 million people — one third of South Africa's



population.

To wield the whip more effectively, the police force is to raise its strength by another 11,000 — nearly 20%. This is their answer to the recognition from General Wandrag, the country's chief counter-insurgency commander that the situation is close to slipping out of control:

"Even those people we used to be able to rely on have dwindled."

General Wandrag, like many of the regime's spokespersons, blames this erosion of the authority of the state upon the media exposure of police violence:

"Rioters are seen as innocent victims of a brutal police and army," he complained to a security conference in Johannesburg.

With the death toll of black youth and workers gunned down by cops rising steadily day by day, Botha's answer to this problem was to clamp down on press — and particularly television — coverage. This transparent attempt to turn the lights out on the brutality was met by a predictably weak-hearted response from those who have argued that Botha is taking steps towards "reform".

More courage was shown in challenging Botha's clampdown by the South African editor of the *Cape Times* (who risked a heavy jail sentence by publishing an interview with ANC leader Oliver Tambo) than by any of the Western news agencies.

Of course the muzzling of television coverage has not ended the

violence of Botha's cops and soldiers, whose tally of school students and young workers has steadily risen.

Significantly, the more blatant ambush and slaughter of stone-throwing children (a few days after the Nassau deal) followed the first major incursions of the black struggle into the white shopping areas of Johannesburg — in the wave of anger at the execution of pro-ANC poet Benjamin Moleise.

As he steps up the bloodshed and reveals more of the as yet unused potential repressive power of the South African state, Botha has to act more firmly than ever to suppress dissident currents among his former

supporters.

His regime has been more and more stridently denounced by business leaders. Now even leaders of the Dutch Reformed Church have had to be bludgeoned out of a planned trip to meet ANC leaders by threats to withdraw their passports.

Passports of students from the former orthodox Afrikaaner hotbed of Stellenbosch University were confiscated after they, too, planned to meet the ANC.

Botha's motives are clear: only by preventing direct discussions and information about the ANC can he sustain his Cold War propaganda myth that they are a bunch of red revolutionaries, and thus reinforce the hostility of white South Africans to any kind of negotiations or compromise.

The reality — as the *Cape Times* interview and many others with ANC leader Oliver Tambo have shown — is very different. The ANC's political perspective is restricted to achieving a democratic reform of South African capitalism.

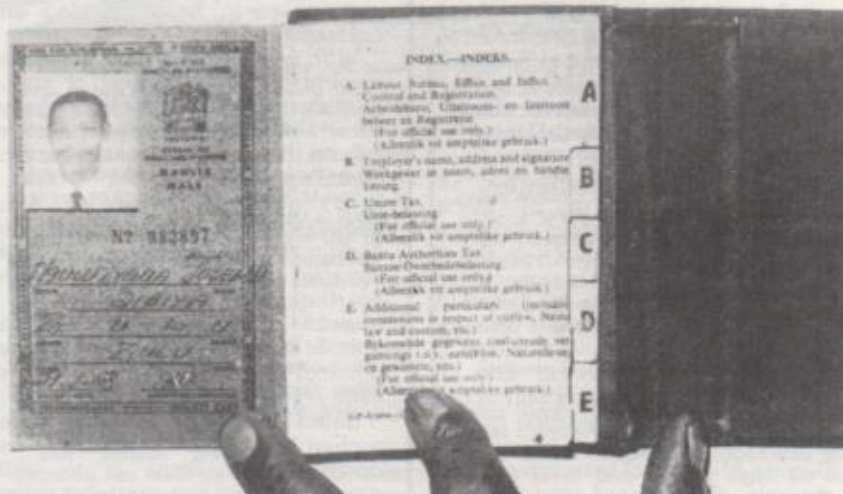
Tambo told the *Cape Times* that — like many reformist programmes, the ANC Freedom Charter envisages that:

"the state would control some of the industries, solely with a view to ensuring an equitable distribution of the wealth that we have."

He admitted that even the business leaders who met the ANC accept that there should be some redistribution of wealth, and then stressed that the ANC programme would *retain* capitalism in South Africa:

"It would be a mixed economy. But there would be private ownership, there would be levels of private enterprise and it would all be geared to the situation that obtains at the time."

Roy Hattersley could well make similar statements. The ANC, for all its talk of armed struggle, seeks to *reform* rather than smash the apartheid capitalist state machine in South Africa. Its deliberate separation of apartheid from the question of capitalist rule is no accident: it chimes in exactly with the white



A passbook: the fight for democratic rights links with demands for jobs and wages

International Defence & Aid Fund



"liberals", whose Progressive Federal Party is best known in the form of MP Helen Susman. Her view is that:

"The fact that young blacks today believe that apartheid and capitalism go hand in hand is of course a misconception."

Botha knows better. And Botha is also under pressure from the far right, who are alarmed by even the tokenistic reforms that have been made so far, and who made significant gains in the recent by-elections. This reactionary pressure makes it even more likely that police violence will continue at its present high levels, and escalate further for every black mobilisation which reaches into "white" areas.

Instead of the fragmentation of the struggle, and the separation of the trade unions from the fight for democratic rights, South African blacks need to find ways of *linking* the community organisations, students' unions, trade unions and all political organisations committed to fight the apartheid regime in *councils of action* in each locality.

Such joint bodies would in many cases necessarily be clandestine because of the emergency regulations, but, as Solidarnosc showed in Poland, under conditions of mass revolt they can still be built.

They would offer the best forum to thrash out a programme of demands linking the democratic issues in each area with immediate economic demands — taking up local issues on housing, rents, transport, unemployment, wages, redundancies and all other questions affecting the black communities. The recent development of student struggles — turning from school boycotts to school occupations — could also be linked to community mobilisations through councils of action.

Meanwhile the growing tide of police violence is finding only spontaneous flurries of retaliation from a largely defenceless black population. Despite ANC talk of launching armed struggle, their record over the past year suggests that they still see this as



(Top) Youth in Soweto; (Above) unemployed workers in Johannesburg

a few isolated heroic acts by a small minority of trained cadres — and not the systematic organisation of self defence by the mass movement of black workers.

It is difficult to prescribe precisely the forms and methods that are possible under the varied conditions of repression. But the move to prepare a *workers' militia* to defend the townships and workplaces against the raids of police and army is a crucial issue if the power of Botha's state machine is to be confronted and cracked.

With more and more black families experiencing the tragedy of young relatives martyred to the fight against apartheid, the appeal for collective, mass self defence will gather pace by the day.

In the fight for the linking of the democratic and economic demands, and for the leading role of the working class in the struggle to smash the apartheid regime, the building of a Marxist Party capable of grasping the politics of the ANC, UDF and other political currents of the mass movement is increasingly urgent.

South Africa's black workers need a class leadership as conscious and committed as Botha is to white supremacy and the capitalist system which apartheid defends.



Scandinavian unions lead the way

By TERRY SMITH

THE November 9 Anti-Apartheid demonstration was the biggest ever. Tens of thousands turned out to register their revulsion at the Botha regime and their solidarity with the struggles of the black majority.

But this increased support has still not found adequate reflection in the British trade union movement, which lags shamefully behind other countries in its failure to mobilise solidarity action. Australian dockers recently mounted a week of action against South African goods. Meanwhile, in Scandinavia, trade with South Africa has been all but completely halted by trade union boycotts.

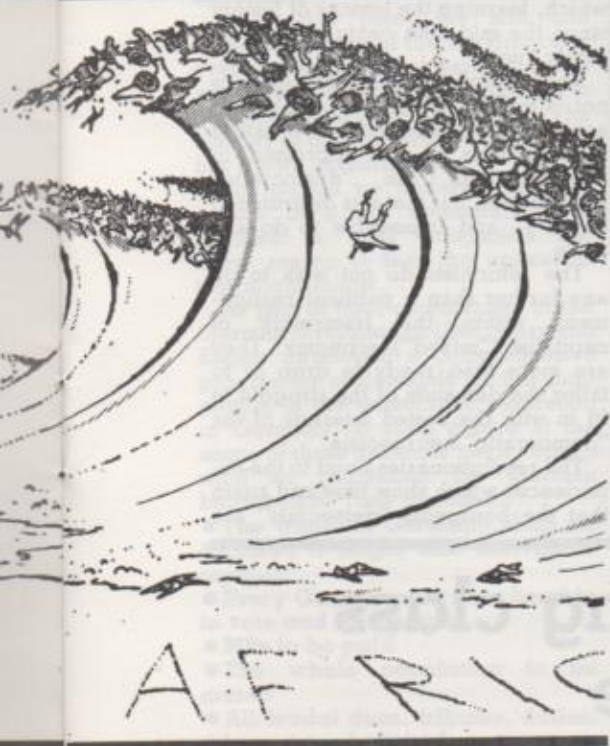
• Finland's transport workers have mounted an indefinite boycott on South African trade.

• Norwegian transport workers have decided to boycott imports from South Africa.

• Swedish transport workers joined this action at the end of October, halting an annual flow of trade which totalled £245 million last year. Raw materials for Sweden's steel plants have been hit.

• Danish workers are expected to begin their boycott this month.

But when the Swedish transport union tried to get a boycott policy adopted by the International Transport Workers Federation they were blocked by West German and British unions!



The British opposition does not arise from union leaders attempting to carry such policies and being rebuffed: it arises from their refusal even to try to impose a serious boycott on South African trade. Far from producing information to spell out the case for action to British workers the trade union leaders have allowed Thatcher to set the pace with her arguments that sanctions or boycott action would immediately bring redundancies.

One exception to this has been the refusal of Swansea and Liverpool dockers to unload cargoes of South African coal, this time with support from the TGWU and (not surprisingly) the NUM.

The British National Union of Seamen, as well as the TGWU, have also been involved in the international moves by Maritime Unions Against

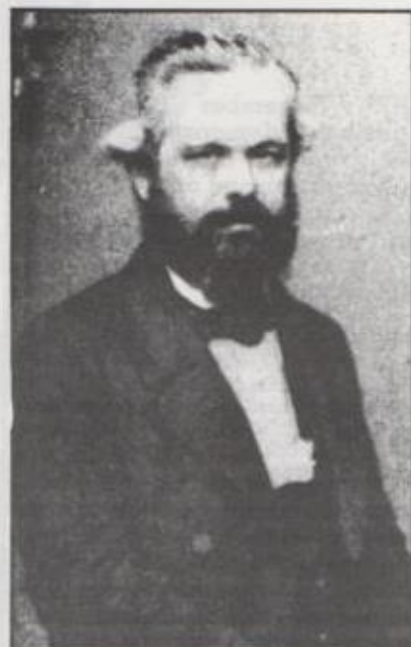
Apartheid to boycott shipping and oil companies involved in supplying oil to South Africa — a campaign supported by the United Nations.

The fact remains that determined action by the TGWU, USDAW and a few other unions could rapidly bring South African trade with Britain to a grinding halt. Despite lip service to the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SAC-TU), who have called for action to break all links, there is little sign that British union leaders intend to fight for any such policy.

Labour Parties, union branches and local campaigns would do well to focus their South African solidarity work on local targets for action, and seeking to force union officials at local and national level into a real fight on the issue.

Marx's legacy to liberation struggles

Permanent Revolution



Karl Marx

"[The German workers] must contribute most to their final victory, by informing themselves of their own class interests, by taking up their independent political position as soon as possible, by not allowing themselves to be misled by the hypocritical phrases of the democratic petty bourgeoisie into doubting for one minute the necessity of an independently organised party of the proletariat. Their battle-cry must be: The Permanent Revolution."

[Marx and Engels: *Address of the Central Committee to the Communist League (March 1850)* in *The Revolutions of 1848* (Penguin) p330.]

MARX's insistence upon the need for political independence of the working class even while fighting alongside other classes for the overthrow of feudal, dictatorial or imperialist rule is the very kernel of the "theory" — or rather *strategy* — of Permanent Revolution, as defended today only by the Trotskyist movement.

The very term "permanent" (meaning *unbroken, uninterrupted*) revolution" has caused certain confusion: the concept has been poorly explained, and too little employed as a guide to action by the Trotskyist movement in the period since the war. This article is designed to spell out a few of the issues involved, and to underline the importance of permanent revolution to any serious revolutionary strategy today.

If we look at three of the central flashpoints of the international class struggle — El Salvador; South Africa; the Philippines — we can see that the question of democracy — national liberation and unification; the destruction of the power of the dictatorial ruling minority; the question of the land and the peasantry; the establishment of rights for the labour

By HARRY SLOAN

movement and a democratic constituent assembly — is central in each case. The same is true of countless other situations in the underdeveloped countries.

In bygone days, of course, the "democratic revolution" was carried through by the capitalist class — or sections of it — in alliances with the peasantry, the urban petty bourgeoisie and even section of workers, under the cross-class appeal for "Liberty, Fraternity, Equality".

In the great bourgeois revolutions which overturned the monarchies of England (1640) and France (1789) the bourgeoisie emerged on the stage as a disruptive, revolutionary democratic force.

Even today in South Africa, in the Philippines and (to a much lesser extent) in El Salvador, there are sections of capitalists who proclaim themselves for democratic change: is it still possible therefore to carry through the democratic revolution required to oust these regimes and satisfy the demands of the struggle

without the overthrow of capitalism? Can the democratic revolution be achieved arm in arm with the capitalists — even with capitalists in the leadership of the movement?

The reply to that question divides today's workers' movement between the reformists (comprising a wide range of nationalist and liberal forces, social democrats and Stalinists) who answer "yes"; and the revolutionary Marxist movement which, learning the lessons of history since the mid 19th century, answers firmly "no".

The reformist position of course is not simply that it is *possible* to achieve real democracy and to satisfy the demands of the oppressed in alliance with the "democratic" bourgeoisie, but that it is *desirable* to do so — and *impossible* to do any more.

The reformists do not wish to go any further than a political realignment within the framework of capitalist ("mixed") economy. They are more than ready to drop or to tailor the demands of the struggle to fit in with the vested interests of the "democratic" bourgeoisie.

The revolutionaries point to the experiences which show time and again that the bourgeois "democrats" are

The politics of working class independence

more frightened of the working class than they are committed to achieving even their own demands. Even where the bourgeoisie or petty bourgeois leaders achieve power (or find it thrust upon them) they are more ready to attack the working class than the old regime, and swiftly assemble a new state machinery which defends capitalism against the workers. Having taken power as "democrats" these leaderships refuse to carry through the democratic programme. The examples are legion — every one of the African and Arab states liberated from imperialist rule has witnessed such a development — similarly India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka: the "democratic" bourgeoisie wants democracy only to carry out its unhindered exploitation of the working class — and is incapable of delivering a completed democratic revolution.

This first became plain long ago in the wave of democratic revolutions which shook Europe in 1848, and perhaps most clearly of all in the German revolution, where the question of national unification, and smashing the power of feudal landowners and the monarchy was raised to centre stage.

Sooner than unite with the peasantry in the overthrow of the old aristocracy, the German bourgeoisie held back — fearful that if it were to become the new ruling class it would only have to face the rising power of what was still a comparatively small and divided working class. It was this which caused Marx and Engels to conclude that only the victory of the working class could bring the democratic revolution to a conclusion in Germany — and hence to put forward the battle cry of "Permanent Revolution".

Since that point the size and economic power of the working class even in the more backward countries has developed out of all proportion to the situation in Germany in 1848. The timidity of the bourgeois "democrats" has grown accordingly.

Nor should we underestimate the impact of a full democratic programme: a weak bourgeoisie has every reason to fear the upheavals that might follow.

As part of their commitment to the German revolution of 1848, Marx and Engels developed a comprehensive programme of demands for the completion of the democratic revolution in Germany. A brief glance at the scope of these demands helps explain what so frightened the German bourgeoisie. They included:

- The whole of Germany shall be declared a single and indivisible republic
- Every German over 21 to be able to vote and be elected
- MPs to be paid
- The whole population to be armed
- All feudal dues, tributes, duties, tithes, etc., abolished



The last "classical" bourgeois revolution, 1793: the French execute Louis XVI.

● Estates of princes and feudal lords, and all mines and pits to become state property, and collectively worked

● One state bank to replace all private banks

● All transport to be taken over by the state

● Complete separation of Church and State

● "Severely progressive" taxation

● Job creation and care for those unable to work

● Universal and free education.

These demands are *not* a socialist programme: there is no proposal to nationalise industry. They are a revolutionary democratic programme — sufficient completely to sever the links between the bourgeoisie and the old order of aristocrats.

It is precisely this kind of break which the bourgeoisie since 1848 has refused to make. This in turn has prevented the completion of the democratic revolution or stalled it altogether.

Today, we would add even more demands to the democratic programme in the light of subsequent development, particularly democratic demands relating to the liberation of women.

Small wonder today's bourgeoisie in El Salvador, South Africa and the Philippines for the most part prefers to cling on to the existing regime — for all its problems — rather than risk

the outcome of a thoroughgoing democratic revolution!

The fact is that while supporting some or all of those demands and thus finding themselves in a degree of conflict with the old regime, the democratic bourgeoisie is, like the aristocracy, a *propertied* class, whose wealth and position derives from the exploitation of workers. It is this common bond of property which always proves stronger than any emotional attachment or moral commitment they may have to democracy.

The peasantry is also a propertied class (albeit on a much smaller scale) and also tied to the ruling class therefore by economic links as well as by age-old customs and historic political backwardness. Their small-holdings of land give peasants a distinct position from that of the working class.

Though the peasants, like workers, are exploited by the bourgeoisie and by the old aristocracy and the landowners — and can with the right tactics be won over to a revolution led by the workers — the need to understand their distinct class position was stressed by Marx and Engels, and re-emphasised by Lenin and particularly by Trotsky in the context of the Russian situation prior to 1917.

The only consistently revolutionary class, the only propertyless class with no interests in preserving the old order, is the *working class*, the industrial proletariat. While it can and

must make common cause in the struggle for democracy and fight alongside other classes, and while it must make alliances with the poorest peasants and petty bourgeois, the central factor must remain its political and organisational independence.

Marx and Engels emphasised this as one of the most basic lessons of the 1848 revolutions.

"The workers' party must go into battle with the maximum degree of organisation, unity and independence, so that it is not exploited and taken in tow by the bourgeoisie as in 1848."

[ibid, p320]

For those who have observed the way in which the workers' movement has been cynically used as a tool by position-seeking bourgeois nationalist leaders — not least in African countries, and perhaps most classically in Iran with the emergence of Khomeini — the words and warnings of Marx and Engels in 1850 have a strangely modern sound to them.

Simply against those who feel revolutionaries should plunge uncritically into alliances and unified organisations with cross class forces in Central America, an analysis of the German situation leads Marx and Engels to draw out an apt warning:

"The petty bourgeois democratic party in Germany is very powerful. It not only embraces the great majority of the urban middle class, the small industrial merchants and master craftsmen; it also includes among its followers the peasants and rural proletariat in so far as the latter has not yet found support among the independent proletariat of the towns.

The relationship of the revolutionary workers' party to the petty bourgeois democrats is this: it cooperates with them against the party which they wish to overthrow; it opposes them wherever they wish to secure their own position."

[ibid p322]

The role of the petty bourgeois throughout history has been one of exploiting and then seeking to crush the power of the working class. We may look at Mugabe's sudden rise to power and the immediate suppression of strikes in Zimbabwe; we may look to the consolidation of power by petty bourgeois regimes in Angola, Mozambique or other examples going back to the Algerian Revolution. The general lesson for the working class is summed up by Marx and Engels:

"While the democratic petty bourgeois want to bring the revolution to an end as quickly as possible (...) it is our interest and our task to make the revolution permanent until all the more or less propertied classes have been driven from their ruling positions, until the proletariat has conquered state power and until the association of



The German revolution of 1848.

the proletarians has progressed sufficiently far — not only in one country but in all the leading countries of the world — that competition between the proletarians of these countries ceases and at least the decisive forces of production are concentrated in the hands of the workers.

"Our concern cannot simply be to modify private property, but to abolish it, not to hush up class antagonisms but to abolish classes, not to improve the existing society but to found a real one."

[ibid p3223-4]

Here — over 70 years before Stalin's reactionary "theory" of building socialism in one country — Marx and Engels link the completion of the "permanent revolution" to the international struggle for socialism.

Such was the richness of the revolutionary experience they were examining that they were able to go in even greater detail into an exposure of the methods of entrapment employed by the "democratic petty bourgeois" — the equivalent of today's reformist wing of the workers' movement — and the need to resist. It seems almost as if Marx and Engels have followed the lessons of the Popular Fronts of the 1930s or have been reading the latest proposals to "unify" the opposition forces in El Salvador:

"They [the petty bourgeois democrats] extend the hand of

friendship, and seek to found a great opposition party which will embrace all democratic opinion; that is they seek to ensnare workers in a party organisation in which general social-democratic phrases prevail, while their particular interests are kept hidden behind, and in which, for the sake of preserving the peace, the specific demands of the proletariat may not be presented. Such unity would be to their advantage alone and to the complete disadvantage of the proletariat. The proletariat would lose all its hard-won independent position and be reduced once more to a mere appendage of official bourgeois democracy."

[ibid p324]

Marx and Engels call instead for an independent organisation of a workers' party "alongside the official democrats".

"During and after the struggle the workers must at every opportunity put forward their own demands against those of the bourgeois democrats. They must demand guarantees for the workers as soon as the democratic bourgeoisie sets about taking over the government... They must check in every way the victory euphoria and enthusiasm for the new situation which follows every successful street battle, with a cool and cold-blooded analysis of the situation and with undisguised mistrust of



the new government."

[ibid p324-5]

This same spirit of working class independence became part of the driving force of Lenin and the Bolsheviks — indeed it was precisely over the necessity for this type for firm and disciplined leadership, and the rejection of any perspective of class collaboration with the "democratic bourgeoisie" in Russia, that the Bolsheviks split in 1903 from the Menshevik wing of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party.

While the Mensheviks — ignoring the lessons of 1848 — clung to the notion that the liberal bourgeoisie would play the leading role in the democratic revolution in Russia,



"I proceeded precisely from the bourgeois-democratic character of the revolution and arrived at the conclusion that the profundity of the agrarian crisis could raise the proletariat of backward Russia to power... This was precisely the idea I defended on the eve of the 1905 Revolution. This was precisely the idea that was expressed by the very designation of the revolution as a 'permanent', that is an uninterrupted one, a revolution passing over directly from the bourgeois stage into the socialist. To express the same idea Lenin later used the excellent expression of the bourgeois revolution growing over into the socialist."

[Leon Trotsky. Introduction to *Permanent Revolution* (New Park) p12. emphasis added].

Lenin argued that the centrality of the agrarian question in a backward land of massed peasantry raised the central role of an alliance between the workers and the poor peasants as the driving force of revolution. If victorious, Lenin argued that these combined forces would establish a "democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry".

This term left open the possibility of a regime which fell short of a revolutionary workers' state, but which rested on a more radical mass base than a "democratic" bourgeois regime. Lenin did not at this stage (1905) rule out the possibility that the peasantry might even develop a mass party of its own which might play some independent role.

Trotsky criticized not Lenin's focus on the agrarian revolution or the emphasis upon the alliance of the most oppressed against the liberal bourgeoisie, but the fact that Lenin's formula placed two antagonistic forces simultaneously in the driving seat. It left open whether the actual dictatorial power would be exercised by the proletariat or by the peasantry when it came to the crunch.

Trotsky argued that the peasantry, for all its size and weight, did not have the political independence to form a genuine party of its own which would not either fall prey to the bourgeoisie or follow the lead of the proletariat. The completion even of

the tasks demanded by the peasantry could only be carried through if the *working class* assumed the leading role, breaking boldly from the land-downers and making the democratic programme part of its own.

Pursuing the argument in his 1904 pamphlet *Results and Prospects*, Trotsky pointed out that a victorious alliance of workers and peasants in Russia would need to act swiftly — and by no means "democratically" or through Parliamentary procedures — to secure its survival by dismissing key reactionaries from the army and the state machine, and disbanding those regiments most involved with crimes against the people. It would hardly be a "democracy" in the traditional sense.

And on the level of immediate demands, the same government, theoretically representing both pea-

sant and working class interests, would need to take steps to defend the agricultural proletariat — measures which would be strongly opposed by sections of the peasantry.

Other contentious issues would be the 8-hour day; support for the unemployed; government support for strikers; and the need to expropriate those capitalists who attempted to lock out their workers or disrupt the new regime. To each of these questions a *proletarian* answer would need to be given.

The expropriation of the large estates raised a further question: would a hypothetical "democratic

After Lenin's return to Russia in April — an anti-war demonstration





dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry decide to carve up those estates into small plots for landless peasants and agricultural workers? Or would it decide rather to retain them as larger units, and farm them collectively? The proletarian programme points to a collective, socialised economy, the traditional peasant demand is for individual land ownership.

Such question, Trotsky stressed, could prove decisive for the very survival of a revolutionary government: on each of them the only consistently revolutionary line came from the proletariat, not the peasantry.

The democratic programme, and even the minimum demands of the workers, could only be achieved by a government under the control of the working class, the *dictatorship of the proletariat*. For this reason, Trotsky argued, the "democratic dictatorship" formula should be discarded.

The Marxist goal was to wage an independent struggle within the unfolding democratic revolution, and to create the conditions for the working class to play the leading role, cementing an alliance with the poorest sectors of the peasantry, so that the democratic revolution against Tsarism could "grow over" in an uninterrupted way into the socialist revolution and the seizure of power by the workers.

Nor was it a question of Marxists artificially trying to fabricate a process of "growing over". In the emergence of the powerful Soviets (workers' councils) based on the key workplaces, and reaching into the army, the Russian working class and sections of the peasantry showed that the struggle had by no means been

resolved in the February 1917 "democratic" revolution, while the bourgeoisie and their reformist hangers-on gave proof that the democratic programme could only be carried through under the leadership of the working class.

In April 1917, stridently denouncing Joseph Stalin and other "old Bolsheviks" within Russia who had since February given support to the bourgeois "Provisional Government" and even to its contribution of the imperialist war, Lenin reaffirmed the fight for an independent class line, and for internationalism, and decisively shifted the line of the Bolshevik Party toward the October Revolution.

Again the watch-words for this turn had been established by Marx and Engels sixty years previously:

"Alongside the new official governments [the workers] must simultaneously establish their own revolutionary workers' governments, either in the form of local executive committees and councils or through workers' clubs or committees... In a word, from the very moment of victory the workers' suspicion must be directed no longer against the defeated reactionary party but against their former ally, against the party which intends to exploit the common victory for itself.

To be able forcefully and threateningly to oppose this party, whose betrayal of the workers will begin with the very first hour of victory, the workers must be armed and organised. The whole proletariat must be armed at once with muskets, rifles, cannon and ammunition, and the revival of the

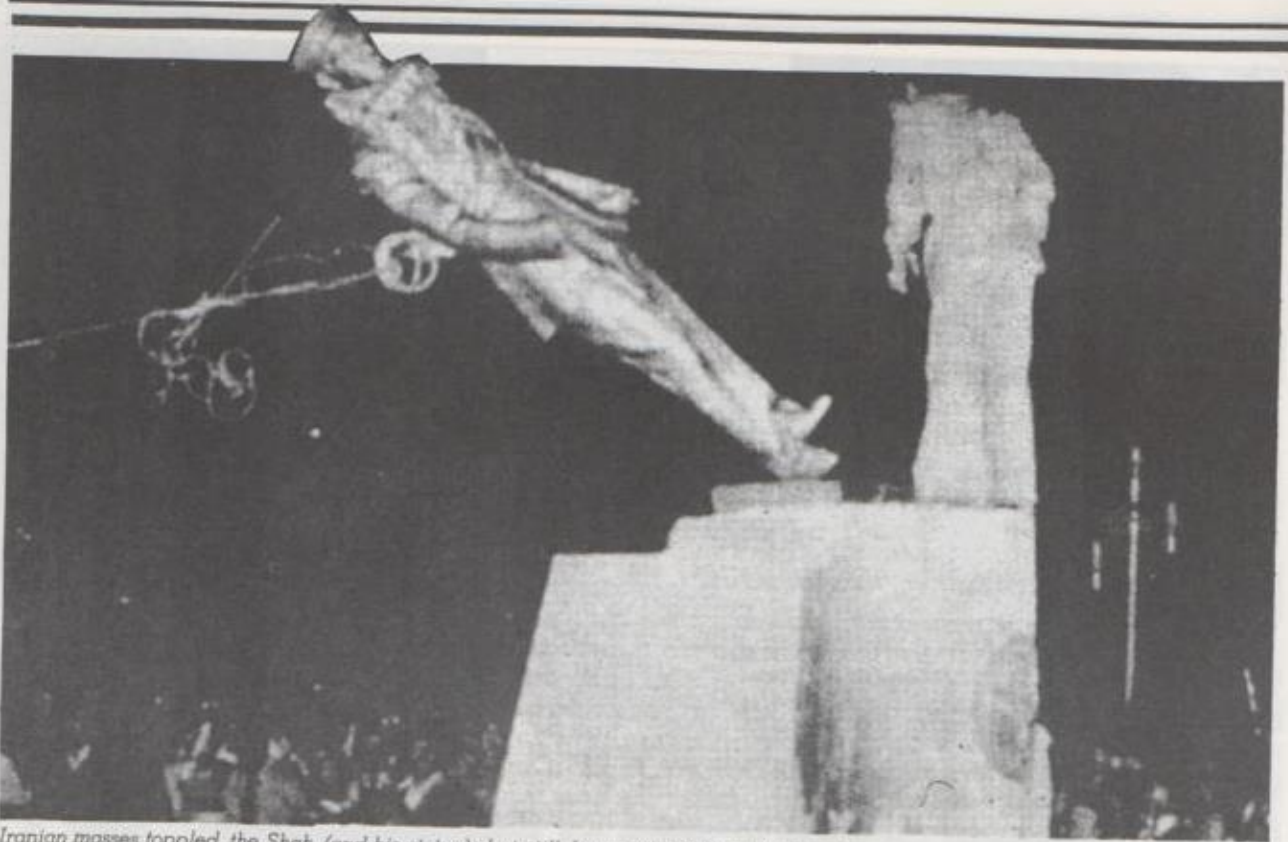
old-style citizens' militia, directed against the workers, must be opposed. Where the formation of this militia cannot be prevented, the workers must try to organise themselves independently as a proletarian guard, with elected leaders and with their own elected general staff: they must try to place themselves not under the orders of the state authority but of the revolutionary local councils set up by the workers."

[ibid p326]

In the fight to take forward the uninterrupted, "permanent" revolution, and in the fight to mobilise armed bodies of workers as part of a dual power challenge to the Provisional Government, Lenin was therefore building on the actual situation in Russia and on the Marxist tradition and the lessons of the 1848 revolutions.

In the aftermath of the October Russian Revolution, Trotsky began consciously to work through these lessons and to spell out the programmatic insistence upon the fight for the dictatorship of the proletariat as the only means to complete the democratic revolution. But he ran into immediate opposition from Joseph Stalin and the bureaucratic caste which had begun to emerge within the strife-torn, isolated and backward workers' state.

Showing that nothing had been learned by some "old Bolsheviks" from the upheavals of the Revolution itself, and giving voice to a mood of demoralisation, conservatism and nationalism among whole sections of the Russian peasantry, Stalin was by 1924 feeling his way towards a renunciation of international revolution in his



Iranian masses toppled the Shah (and his statue): but still have not achieved democracy.

"theory" of socialism in one country, and looking for ready-made, easy allies internationally, among whom the Chinese nationalist leader Chiang Kai Shek was prominent.

Echoing all of the worst formulae from the past — the discredited notion of the leading role of the bourgeoisie in national liberation — Stalin recognised Chiang's bourgeois party, the Kuomintang, as the leading party of the Chinese revolution.

He compelled the Chinese Communist Party to enter and submit to the discipline of the Kuomintang, instructed Communists to help put down peasant struggles, and forbade the establishment of soviets.

In April 1927, Chiang repaid Stalin's trust by staging a brutal counter-revolutionary coup in Shanghai and executing thousands of Communists. There followed a succession of further disasters.

Small wonder Stalin found Trotsky's insistence upon permanent revolution and resolute defence of independent working class organisation and policy to be a major challenge: small wonder the bureaucratic machinery of the Kremlin expended such energy in slandering Trotsky's line — the line of Lenin and Marx — and instilling in the degenerated "Communist International" the discredited formulae of the Mensheviks.

Small wonder today that the Communist parties and CP-influenced groupings which have descended from Stalin's Comintern are as fiercely opposed today to the concept and strategy of permanent revolution as they are committed to politics of class collaboration and reform. They

adamantly insist upon the separation of the democratic and socialist revolutions, because that is the cornerstone of their search for "progressive" sections of the capitalist class and "broad popular alliances."

When we argue today that there is only a working class solution to the struggles in El Salvador, South Africa, and the Philippines, we are not arguing for any less emphasis on the democratic tasks to be accomplished in the revolution. We are certainly not arguing against an alliance between the working class (in South Africa specifically the black working class) and the poorest layers of peasants and petty bourgeoisie.

We are stressing that even the minimal demands of the proletariat and the carrying through of the democratic revolution go beyond anything that can be accomplished by or under the leadership of the "democratic" capitalists.

We are insisting that the workers, committing themselves to the struggle, should maintain their independent organisations, their own demands and programme.

Fighting alongside the various "democrats" who are prepared to use revolutionary means against the existing regime, workers must maintain their own revolutionary organisations. Incorporating the democratic demands, alongside the specifically socialist programme of a workers' organisation, they must remain committed to the socialist struggle — and (as Marx and Engels insisted) not stop short "until all the more or less property classes have been driven from

their ruling positions, until the proletariat has conquered state power."

From this standpoint, permanent revolution is not so much a "theory" as a strategic conception, an orientation within the struggle on an international level. It is not a jargon term to be confusingly used by academics, but a "battle cry" for the workers. Nor therefore is it a disposable notion within the vocabulary of Trotskyism and class politics: those who wilfully discard permanent revolution embrace the reformist line of class collaboration — all too often its Stalinist version.

"The permanent revolution, in the sense which Marx attached to this concept, means a revolution which makes no compromise with any single form of class rule, which does not stop at the democratic stage, which goes over to socialist measures and to war against reaction from without; that is, a revolution whose ever successive stage is rooted in the preceding one, and which can end only in the complete liquidation of class society."

[Trotsky: Introduction to The Permanent Revolution (New Park) p6].

Further Reading:

Marx, *The Class struggles in France 1848 to 1850*.

Marx, *The Revolutions of 1848 (Penguin)*.

Lenin, *The April Theses*.

Trotsky, *Lessons of October (New Park)*.

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Baku, *Congress of the Peoples of the East (New Park)*.

Nicaraguan leaders clamp down on Contras' allies

By HARRY SLOAN

THE greasy grins, backslapping and handshakes between Gorbachev and Reagan in Geneva stand in some contrast to the increasing US efforts to destabilise and overthrow the Nicaraguan government.

Washington has consistently and without proof denounced Nicaragua's Sandinista leaders as "Marxists" and "agents of Moscow" — and funnelled tens of millions of dollars to finance the terrorist activities of the "contra" forces who carry out their murders under the cynical banner of the Nicaraguan Democratic Front.

But while the contras have operated from bases in neighbouring Honduras and Costa Rica — mounting bloody cross-border raids and occasional CIA-orchestrated sabotage missions against ports and economic targets — the counter-revolutionary struggle has also found solid support in the hierarchy of Nicaragua's Catholic Church.

In many dictatorial regimes, Church leaders have to some degree supported liberation struggles: but in democratic Nicaragua there has been running battle between the Sandinistas and Cardinal Obando y Bravo.

The Church has taken a particularly vicious stand against the conscription of soldiers to fight the contras — though it mounted no such campaign to prevent former dictator Somoza recruiting for his notoriously brutal National Guard. Indeed many of the NDF's contra forces today are disgruntled and defeated National Guard thugs looking for vengeance and a return to the old-style dictatorship.

The publication in October of a church-sponsored newspaper attacking the Sandinista government and conscription appears to have been one of the decisive triggers to a new clampdown on civil liberties.

President Ortega announced measures including curbs on the freedom of the press, and restrictions on the right of assembly and habeas corpus.

He blamed the crackdown firmly on the escalating American offensive



and on "agents of imperialism in the interior" who are "developing actions to sabotage and destabilise the defence of our homeland."

The extent to which the capitalist parties in Nicaragua — more or less open supporters of the contra gangs — have been allowed to operate freely has been the strangely exceptional feature of the Sandinista revolution. Of course even then not all were satisfied: journalists complained that detailed reportage of military matters to do with the war were being censored — as if they are reported in other countries!

But those who imagined that the Sandinistas could continue to allow such freedoms even while imperialist pressure has grown were naïve in the extreme. In a poor, blockaded country, where the forces of reaction have

THE SITUATION IS NEW REACTIONS LEADING TO NEW LEADERSHIP AN END TO THE MILITARY BUILD-UP AND A PLEASE TO STOP ENDORSING REBELLION IN NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES.



AGREED, WHICH ONE ARE YOU GOING TO DO FIRST?



vast US resources at their disposal, the struggle to defend and extend the revolution of 1979 could never be reduced to some kind of large scale debate or ideological exercise.

To defend the revolution means physically and militarily to beat down those who are arrogantly threatening to overturn it and return Nicaragua to the dark ages of Somoza.

But though the Sandinistas recognise this on one level — and have sought to mobilise the necessary arms, equipment and human resources to repel and inflict defeats upon the contras — there is another level on which they are opposed to carrying through the same fight.

Ortega and the Sandinistas fought the election pledged to maintain a "mixed" (capitalist) economy, within which the reactionary capitalist allies of the contras continue to own and control a majority of the means of production.

While the new restrictions may censor some publications and outlaw some gatherings of counter-revolutionaries, they will not eradicate this wealthy and well-placed fifth column of imperialism — or confront the power of the Church with a fullscale education campaign: leading Sandinista ministers are also Jesuit priests.

The firm moves that have been taken must be seen in this context — not least because the new restrictions on civil liberties apply at least potentially to the Nicaraguan workers' movement as well as to the reactionaries.

A counter-offensive against the NDF and its allies is legitimate — even overdue. The censorship of the press in wartime is nothing extraordinary in itself — simply extraordinarily late in this instance.

But in supporting measures to crush the contras, Nicaraguan workers should ask themselves how long the right wing capitalists are to be let off the hook — and in whose interests? Is it not high time that their factories, land and other assets were seized, and they were forced to join their real colleagues in the contra camps across the border or luxurious villas in Miami?

Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign:

20/21 Compton Terrace, London N1.

"International": a break from opportunism

By HARRY SLOAN

A NEW star is twinkling among the galaxies of left groupings in Britain.

A recent split in the Editorial Board of *Socialist Action* has brought the publication of the magazine *International*, whose supporters are pledged to offer an alternative to the opportunist line of that paper on national and international questions.

Little has appeared in print from either side of the split to explain the issues involved, but the decisive differences have without doubt centred on the miners' strike in Britain and the emergence within *Socialist Action* of a substantial current of opinion which favours abandoning the Marxist strategic conception of Permanent Revolution.

During the miners' strike *Socialist Action*, like so much of the far left, opportunistically followed the bandwagon of the NUM leadership, failing to offer either criticism or tactical proposals to advance the strike. Instead, those who in any way criticised the political weaknesses of Scargill, or exposed the cynical role being

played within the NUM by the Communist Party, were denounced as "sectarians".

But these disagreements over the role of Marxists in the strike — one of the most crucial tests of the revolutionary movement since the 1926 General Strike — were compounded by other, equally fundamental differences over orientation towards the leaderships of various national liberation struggles. Just as they refused to criticise Scargill, the leading elements on the *Socialist Action* editorial board have given uncritical support to non-Marxist leaderships overseas — including the reactionary Khomeini regime in Iran.

With one wing of the *Socialist Action* editorial board opting clearly for the Stalinist concept of revolution in "stages" in the underdeveloped countries, as peddled by Fidel Castro and the Communist Party-influenced leaders of many liberation movements, the paper has failed to offer a Marxist analysis or programme.

While Marx and Engels as early as 1850 were arguing that the completion of the national democratic revolution could only be achieved under the leadership of the

working class and interlinked with the socialist revolution, the pro-Castro forces have retreated from this stance.

The consequences included *Socialist Action's* continued support for Khomeini's regime as "progressive", "revolutionary" and "anti-imperialist" even while it persecuted and slaughtered women and gays, jailed and executed communists, and repressed national minorities struggling for self-determination.

Today in South Africa *Socialist Action* advocates an uncritical line towards the CP-influenced African National Congress, with its "Freedom Charter" which sets out to separate the democratic "stage" from the socialist revolution.

International supporters have correctly declared their opposition to such non-Marxist positions, and branded them as an adaptation to Stalinism. And in the first issue of their magazine there is also a clear sign of a more independent, critical stance towards the leadership of the liberation struggle in El Salvador.

While proclaiming itself a paper of Marxists in the Labour Party, *International* supporters argue that their orientation towards the left leaders and the currents of the hard left will be substantially different from *Socialist Action*.

Socialist Action has adapted itself to the reformist politics and takes an uncritical stance towards leaders such as Tony Benn: *International* supporters have argued for a more independent line, while still seeking to link up with left Labour and trade union leaders in common campaigns. And while *Socialist Action* has stood in isolation from *Labour Briefing* and the Labour Left Co-ordination, *International* pledges to build such initiatives to unite the hard left.

Few of the issues raised as differences by *International* will strike readers as new in the politics of *Socialist Action*. So why, after so many years of opportunist politics, and the acceptance of a huge spectrum of political differences within the *Socialist Action* Editorial Board, should the split take place now?

International supporters argue that a series of manoeuvres within the Editorial Board, since January, in which the preservation of political control by a small leading caucus took precedence over the programmatic positions put forward by the paper, finally decided them that a split was the only way in which a break could be made from non-Marxist positions.

They argue strongly that despite the split they remain committed to democratic discussion of political differences, with the line of the magazine decided by collective votes.

Socialist Viewpoint welcomes the break by the comrades of *International*.

While many political questions remain to be resolved — and their new magazine is only in its early stages of development — we hope that their break from the old positions of *Socialist Action* will prove to be a thoroughgoing one, enabling the comrades of *International* to play a full role in the struggle for a Marxist programme and a Marxist leadership in the workers' movement.

Victory against deportation

Mohammed Idrish to stay



AS OVER 200 representatives of campaigns against deportations and labour movement bodies attended a successful conference in Hackney on November 18, there came news of a major victory in the 4-year fight to prevent the deportation of Mohammed Idrish.

The campaign has been backed by his union, NALGO, and included a national demonstration. Eventually a tribunal decision that he was too valuable in his work as a community worker in the West Midlands for the deportation to go ahead.

But the scope and duration of the fight required to beat back the outrageous attack on Mohammed simply underlines the racist brutality of the immigration laws: though he has won his case, hundreds have suffered the agonies of deportation.

The victory must redouble the fight within the labour movement for the repeal of all immigration laws, and the immediate defence of all black workers threatened with deportation.

The Hackney Anti-Deportation Campaign can be contacted at Box 139, Kingsland High St, London E8 2NS.

The developing politics of Sinn Féin

SINN FEIN recently held their annual conference (Ard Fheis) in Dublin. In order to assess the developments in Sinn Féin and their implications for those in the British labour movement campaigning for British withdrawal from Ireland, Mick Woods and Kevin Flack, for *Socialist Viewpoint*, interviewed Nadine Finch, a member of Hackney North Labour Party, who attended the conference on behalf of the NALGO Campaign for a United Ireland.

SV: What are your impressions of the direction Sinn Féin is headed following the decisions of the Ard Fheis?

Nadine Finch: Firstly, the *Women's Department* has worked over the years on the abortion issue. SF has been moved, step-by-step, from fundamental opposition to abortion to their new position of a woman's right to choose. It was won by arguing that if they call for self-determination for the Irish people, they should call for self-determination for women as well. My feelings were very much that it would fall on the woman's conscience so men could ignore it — but it shows a remarkable breakthrough and will lead to many more radical women joining SF. It should be remembered that two years ago SF adopted a secular constitution although links with more radical elements in the Catholic Church are obviously still strong, especially in community campaigns, for instance against drugs.

SV: What is the direction of their economic policy?

Nadine Finch: SF has become more involved in trade union work recently — for instance in supporting the ITGWU campaign against unemployment, and the Dunnes workers strike against handling South African goods. Their policy on nationalisation and general economic policy is to the left of the British Labour Party. The economic debate was a central issue this year. The following is a passage from their policy document: "Furthermore, with James Connolly we believe that the present system of society is based upon the robbery of the working class and that



Sinn Féin President Gerry Adams — identifying with international struggles.

capitalist property cannot exist without the plundering of labour; we desire to see capitalism abolished and a democratic system of common ownership erected in its stead. This democratic system, which is called socialism, will, we believe, come as a result of the continuous increase of power to the working class. Only by this means can we secure the abolition of destitution and all the misery, crime and immorality which flow from that unnecessary evil."

The party also oppose privatisation, advocate the setting up of a state construction company to meet the growing housing crisis and ultimately nationalisation of the banking system. The debate on ownership of the land is also obviously more important in Ireland because of the economic situation and their base amongst small subsistence-level farmers increases their opposition to the EEC. Their policy is to ensure land is held either by small farmers or co-operatives for the benefit of all.

SV: How are their strategies towards building support in the South changing?

Nadine Finch: The leadership were keen to adopt a policy of not contesting elections for the Dail at present but keeping the freedom to do so in the future. This was narrowly thrown out — by 20 votes — and abstentionism was re-affirmed as a principle rather than a tactic.

SV: And in the North?

Nadine Finch: The whole Conference took place with the background of the Anglo-Irish talks and the possibility of the banning of SF. Through the Council election campaigns they have gained both support and active workers. Much campaigning is based around their Advice Centres. They are also building support on Trades Councils through work done by the growing Trade Union Department — historically based in the manual unions and now growing in the public sector unions such as the teaching unions.

SV: How important do SF see international issues?

Nadine Finch: They have been very strong in challenging apartheid, with the Dunnes strike as a focus. They support strongly the liberation struggles in Central America and Palestine — identification with these struggles was the starting point for this year's Presidential speech by Gerry Adams. NATO is currently a central issue — they are worried about the installation of new communications systems, visits by warships, and of possible deals to end the neutrality of the south as a result of the Anglo-Irish talks.

SV: How can we raise the issue of Ireland more effectively in the British trade union movement?

Nadine Finch: Much work is being done by both the TUIUI and the



Civil rights abuses arise from imposition of the border.

Labour Committee on Ireland's Trade Union Department. The Irish Congress of Trade Unions has good policy with regard to strip searching and other civil rights issues. So support can be raised in trade unions in terms of solidarity with the Irish unions on these issues. The connection between the imposition of the border on the 32 counties and the present situation of military suppression leading to civil rights abuses needs to be emphasised. This in turn leads into a discussion of the need for a military and economic withdrawal from the 6 counties.

SV: What issues should be raised in the British Labour Party?

Nadine Finch: SF are very concerned about the outcome of the Anglo-Irish talks and increased suppression of reports in the Irish media from which they gain much publicity. They want invitations from Labour Parties to SF Councillors to come and speak, and in return for delegations, including trade unions and Black delegations, to visit Ireland and work around civil rights issues, as was done over the banning of the TV programme "On the Edge of the Union". Labour CND has an important role to play with regards to stopping Ireland being brought into NATO.

SV: How important do you think the defeats of the resolutions on Ireland at Labour Party Conference were?

Nadine Finch: I think they showed how much work still has to be done in the trade unions. They have to stop voting down all progressive resolutions and using their often insignificant Northern Ireland membership as an excuse for not adopting policies. It must be recognised that very few

Catholics get employed in areas the craft unions organise in (and Catholic trade unionists have to face up to the fact that many of their branches in the 6 counties are dominated by Unionists who attitude to any Catholic is "racist" and repressive).

SV: How strong is Sinn Fein's support amongst the working class?

Nadine Finch: The Ard Fheis is a very working class Conference, with much younger delegates now. The leaders such as Adams recognise clearly that political power lies with the people. Their power base has always been on the streets. Because of the discriminatory employment practices, they have never had control over union bureaucracies, and have to work at shop floor level. Their appeal is to the working class as a whole — membership is not of course restricted to Catholics and some leadership figures are not Catholic.

SV: And how much can SF's programme be seen to be socialist?

Nadine Finch: The Party has changed considerably over the past few years. It may help to look at a couple of extracts from their policy document.:

"Sinn Fein condemns the Free State constitutional position which gives unrestricted rights of private property above the rights of a person to decent accommodation at an affordable rent."

"The only way to create full employment is through state spending and investment and the development of workers co-ops under community control."

"Public ownership or control shall be interpreted as control by the people at the lowest possible unit of government consistent with their requirements."

It is also worth pointing out, after the Labour Party Conference in Bournemouth, how democratic the SF Conference is. The platform was overturned in several votes. There is no preference in calling speakers either — any member, including those on the platform, have to queue for their turn to speak in a debate.

Their socialist direction shows the strength of their education programmes, and the importance attached to cultural and political development.

SV: How do you see the role of the armed struggle?

Nadine Finch: SF argue for support for the separate role the IRA play. Unionists have the veto on their side, their state machinery and the British State on top. The IRA is needed to defend the republicans. It is also true that IRA attacks are only directed at economic and political targets. They have not killed women and children with plastic bullets.

It is also important that we do not attempt to tell the Irish how to fight for their own liberation against British rule. It is strange that people who will support armed liberation struggles in South Africa and Nicaragua will not do so in Ireland.

**Labour Committee on Ireland:
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Ireland and the fight for the First International

This is the third and final article of a series on the links between the Irish struggle and the British workers' movement.

By DAVID MOSS

FOR fifteen years after 1848 there was little mass political agitation in Ireland. In Britain too, Chartism declined rapidly after 1848, leaving the working class with no political organisation of its own.

But in neither country was there a halt in social struggle. In Ireland, agrarian "outrages" by the peasant secret societies, the Ribbonmen, continued throughout the 1850s against evictions. And in Britain the growth of trade unionism was reflected in a number of long and bitter strikes such as the engineers in 1851, the Preston spinners in 1853 and the builders in 1859.

The Irish and British traditions of class conflict often united in the ex-

periences of Irish immigrants in Britain such as Michael Davitt. Davitt exemplifies the life of many Irish men of his generation in Britain — although for bravery and enterprise he stands head and shoulders above most working class leaders of his day.

Davitt's Gaelic-speaking father was a former Ribbonman evicted from his land in 1853, who moved with his family to Haslingden in Lancashire where young Michael was later employed in a cotton factory. Losing an arm in a factory accident, Michael then worked for a printer. His handicap did not prove serious: on one occasion he brandished a revolver to protect Haslingden Catholic church from being attacked by a mob incited by Protestant bigots. In 1865 he joined the Fenian movement and became

centre of the Rossendale circle.

The Fenians had their origin in a secret society established in Dublin in 1858 by James Stephens, a veteran of '48, to fight for a democratic Irish republic. During his exile in Europe, Stephens had come into contact with the ideas of Continental revolutionaries such as Blanqui — although the system of organisation he adopted was reminiscent of the United Irishmen, being organised into a pyramid of cells or "circles" who knew only the leader or "centre" of their own circle. This was the forerunner of the Irish Republican Brotherhood which masterminded the 1916 Easter Rising.

Stephen's organisations merged with the nationalist, cultural Phoenix Society established by O'Donovan Rossa and, anticipating a rising, the authorities arrested several Phoenix "conspirators" in 1859. The Fenian movement recruited amongst workers and peasants in Ireland and expatriot Irish workers in Britain and the United States, where in the early 1860s many Irishmen had gained military experience on one side or the other in the civil war.

There thus existed both the popular base and the military expertise which Young Ireland had lacked in '48. Unfortunately the Fenian method of organisation did not guarantee its immunity from spies as was intended. Indeed the leadership of the movement attracted some cloak and dagger romantics and military adventurers who had no conception of developing a mass revolutionary movement. Stephens himself wavered and the insurrection was postponed in 1865 and '66, while the arrests of Fenians increased in both Ireland and the industrial towns of Britain.

In the same period as this rise of Fenianism there was a revival of organisations in Britain which aimed to promote working class political interests independently of the two capitalist parties, the Liberals and Conservatives. The Trades Unions were becoming more influential, a trades council was established in Glasgow in 1858 and, as a result of the builders' strike, another was set up in London in 1860.

By 1862 the Trades had their own newspaper, *The Beehive*. Demands



Mass Chartist rally in Kennington, 1848.

for legislation to improve working conditions in various industries again raised the question of the working class franchise and many trade unionists adopted the demands of the old Chartists.

There was also a revived interest in international affairs. Trade unionists campaigned against the British government's support for the Southern States in the American civil war, which was seen as a conflict between democracy and a slave-owning aristocracy. In 1863, meetings were held in solidarity with the Polish uprising against Russia and a deputation was sent to Palmerston demanding British intervention on the side of the insurgents. There were also protest meetings against the French occupation of Rome, and when the Italian republican Garibaldi visited Britain in 1864 he was greeted with such popular acclaim and massive demonstrations that the government asked him to leave!

Against this background, the need for permanent international links became increasingly apparent, and in 1864 the International Workingmen's Association was launched with George Odger of the shoemakers' union as its president and with other leading trade unionists on its Council. The political programme it adopted was drawn up by Karl Marx who became the Association's corresponding secretary with Germany.

In 1865, IWMA Council members joined the newly formed National Reform League and played a leading part in the fight to extend the working class suffrage. The following year the International as a whole affiliated to the League. It also made its sympathy with Ireland clear by condemning the maltreatment of Fenian prisoners.

1866 was a worrying year for the British government. Not only was there continuing alarm about the "Fenian conspiracy" but also Reform League agitation was gaining pace throughout the country. A demonstration and rally in Hyde Park were banned, leading to a clash between marchers and police backed by troops resulting in three days of menacing unrest in the capital. There was a severe trade depression, high prices and unemployment, and the latest in the series of "Sheffield Outrages", which involved attempts by militant trade unionists to shoot or bomb non-unionists in the cutlery trade.

This was the political climate when the Fenians determined on a rising in 1867, publishing a proclamation which made a direct appeal to English workers:

"...As for you workmen of England it is not only your hearts we wish, but your arms. Remember the starvation and degradation brought to your firesides by the oppression of labour. Remember the past, look well to the future and avenge yourselves by giving liber-



The foundation of the First International, 1864

ty to your children in the coming struggle for human freedom.

Herewith we Proclaim the Irish Republic.

THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT."

On February 11, hundreds of Fenians from Lancashire, Yorkshire and Cheshire, including Michael Davitt and others who had been brought up in England, converged on Chester, intending to seize the Castle, raid the arsenal, hijack a train to Holyhead and ship the arms to Ireland for the Fenian rising. When it became apparent that the authorities had been alerted, the operation was abandoned.

In Ireland too, the rising did not go as planned. The government was ready and the ill-coordinated risings in various parts of the country were quickly repressed, forcing Fenian leaders to go on the run. Two of these, Kelley and Deasy, were arrested in Manchester and a successful attempt to release them from a police van on September 18 resulted in the death of a constable. It was the arrest and trial of several Irish suspects on dubious evidence, and the government and press baying for blood, which produced a surge of support amongst some British workers.

On November 8 Marx recorded: "...the London proletarians declare every day more openly for the Fenians and hence - an unheard-of and splendid thing here - for first, a violent, and secondly an anti-English movement."

Unfortunately working class political activity had receded since the passing of the Reform Act in August 1867, which increased the

number of working men able to vote. Nevertheless, members of the International spoke at Reform League meetings for support of the Fenians and on November 19 the Council of the International drew up an Address demanding the commutation of the death sentences passed on the Manchester prisoners.

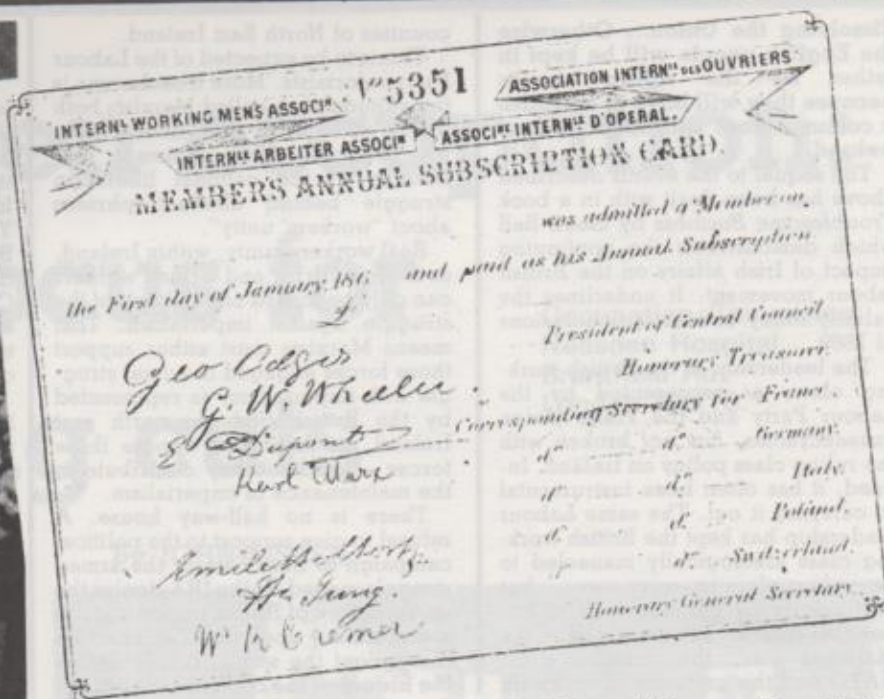
At this meeting Council members affirmed the right of the Fenians to use physical force. William Morgan condemned those working class leaders who, "applauded insurrection abroad but denounced it in Ireland," and John Weston said, "The crime of starving the Irish was far greater than the accidental killing of one man in trying to rescue the Fenian prisoners."

A French revolutionary on the Council, Eugene Dupont, thought that, "The English working men who blame the Fenians commit more than a fault, for the cause of both people is the same. They have the same enemy to defeat, the territorial aristocracy and the capitalists."

Four days later, Allen, O'Brien and Larkin walked to the gallows and into history as the Manchester martyrs. Frederick Engels, whose Irish wife was a staunch Fenian supporter, wrote from Manchester comparing the heroism of the rescue of Deasy and Kelly with John Brown's Harpers Ferry raid which resulted in Brown's execution and the outbreak of the American civil war:

"The Southerners had at least the decency to treat J. Brown as a rebel whereas here everything is being done to transform a political attempt into a common crime."

Although Marx and Engels were critical of some of the Fenian leaders and their "stupidities" which resulted



Membership card for First International

from their conspiratorial methods — particularly the Clerkenwell prison bombing, which killed a dozen and injured over 100 working class people — they thought that:

"Fenianism is characterised by a socialist tendency (in a negative sense directed against the appropriation of the soil) and by being a lower orders movement."

Even though the Fenians lacked a clear social programme the very nature of exploitation in Ireland meant that the struggle against England was social as well as political. Council members also made clear that the situation in Ireland was not the same as that in England. In reply to the trade union leader Ben Lucraft, who criticised the Fenians' use of physical force and the fact that the Irish in Britain had participated little in the Reform agitation, John Weston (a socialist) asserted that centuries of oppression in Ireland could not be cured by English demands for parliamentary reform:

"a government that had trampled upon the rights of the people could never be reached by moral suasion but by physical force resistance."

The International not only unequivocally supported the right of the Irish Republicans to resist British domination by any means, it also led to the campaign for the amnesty of Irish political prisoners. Fenians like O'Donovan Rossa were confined under such barbarous and rigorous conditions that several died and others went insane.

Marx's daughter Jenny was one of the most dedicated advocates of the Fenian prisoners. On October 24 1869 a large amnesty demonstration marched from Trafalgar Square to

Hyde Park under the slogans "Justice for Ireland" and "The Land to the People". Marx continued to emphasise the key importance of the Irish struggle:

"The attitude of the International Association to the Irish question is very clear. Its first need is to encourage the social revolution in England. To this end a great blow must be struck in Ireland."

The General Council's resolutions on the Irish amnesty serve only as an introduction to other resolutions which will affirm that, quite apart from international justice, it is a precondition to the emancipation of the English working class to transform the present forced union (i.e. the enslavement of Ireland) into equal and free confederation if possible, into complete separation if need be."

On March 17 1870 yet another Coercion act was passed conferring emergency powers on the authorities in Ireland. By 1872 there were still 42 Irish political prisoners and in November an amnesty demonstration was called in Hyde Park by the International, despite a government ban on it. About 30,000 gathered, many of them Irish with their own banners and bands playing Irish tunes.

Engels commented that English and Irish workers were "now offering one another the hand of friendship," adding: "The Irish, thanks to their energetic efforts, have saved the right of the people of London to hold meetings in parks when and how they please."

The International also played the lead in attempting to establish a labour party uniting English and Irish workers by founding the Land and Labour League in 1869 which published an *Address... to the Work-*

ing Men and Women of Great Britain and Ireland including demands for land nationalisation and abolition of the standing army. In the International itself, however, Engels and Marx advocated the right of Irish members to set up their own sections:

"There was the fact of seven centuries of English conquest and oppression of Ireland and so long as that oppression existed it would be an insult to Irish working men to ask them to submit to a British Federal Council."

A demand for the release of the remaining Fenian prisoners was included among the resolutions of the British Section of the IWMA held at Manchester in 1873. It also "asserted the right of the working class to use force in order to realise its demands" and called for the nationalisation of the land and all means of production as well as adopting the red flag as its banner.

The First International marked the birth of revolutionary socialism in Britain out of the old working class radicalism. Throughout its existence Marx and Engels fought to give Ireland prominence in its strategy and in the consciousness of the British working class.

British Workers and Ireland Today

An oft quoted passage of Marx — dismissed by many self-proclaimed "Marxists" of today as irrelevant — provides the best summary for these three historical articles:

"I have become more and more convinced — and it remains a matter of driving the point home to the English working classes — that it can never do anything decisive here until it makes a decisive break with the ruling class on its policy on Ireland, until it not only makes common cause with the Irish but actually takes the initiative in

dissolving the Union... Otherwise the English people will be kept in tether by the ruling classes because they will have to establish a common front with them against Ireland."

The sequel to the events described above has been dealt with in a book *Troublesome Business* by Geoff Bell which demonstrates the continuing impact of Irish affairs on the British labour movement. It underlines the validity today of Marx's conclusions of 1869.

The leadership of the British working class, as represented by the Labour Party and the Trade Union bureaucracies, has not broken with the ruling class policy on Ireland. Indeed, it has often been instrumental in carrying it out. The same Labour leadership has kept the British working class ideologically manacled to the ruling class in every way — but particularly by adherence to its imperialist designs as manifested in the Malvinas war, the submission to NATO and the garrisoning of the six

counties of North East Ireland.

This is to be expected of the Labour Party reformists. More treacherous is the attitude of so-called Marxists both inside and out of the Labour Party who conceal their contempt and hostility to the national liberation struggle behind abstract phrases about "workers' unity".

Real workers' unity, within Ireland, or between Irish and British workers can only be forged on the basis of the struggle against imperialism. That means Marxists must either support those forces engaged in actual struggle with imperialism, as represented by the British State in north east Ireland, or they must oppose those forces — and thereby contribute to the maintenance of imperialism.

There is no half-way house. A refusal to give support to the political campaign of Sinn Fein or the armed struggle waged by the IRA denies the whole nature of British imperialism as a continuing spearhead of reaction throughout the world. It also denies the history of the common struggle of

British and Irish workers as outlined above.

Many of the historical parallels between the period we have covered and the present day are too obvious to need re-iteration. It is sufficient to say that as Sinn Fein follows in the footsteps of the United Irishmen, Young Ireland and the Fenians, British revolutionaries must follow the United Britons, the physical force Chartists and the First International if we are to achieve the unity necessary to establish Socialism on both shores of the Irish Sea.

The criminal failures of the radical left, and particularly of Marxists, to put Ireland again on the agenda of the mass labour movement is now being slowly redressed. We must confess that in the final analysis, this is not primarily due to the efforts of British revolutionaries, but to the determination, tenacity and costly sacrifices of Irish Republicans.

7.15三大祝賀記念集

周年・日本共産党(行動派)再建5周年・「新・共産党宣言

日本共産党(行動派)中央委員会



ONE of the lighter moments at this year's Congress of the Japanese Communist Party (Active). Among the more entertaining articles in their September newspaper is one headlined "Revive Nankatsu spirit which means to choose death before surrendering and reconstruct leftist forces by ourselves". No wonder they don't find much to laugh about.

Neasden occupation: new focus for fighting cuts

Occupation Committee:
Neasden Hospital,
Brentfield Rd,
London NW10.

A NEW focus for the fight against NHS cuts and closures has come with the decision of staff, supported by local campaigners, to occupy the 83-bed Neasden geriatric hospital.

The occupation, which began on October 17, was both a warning shot across the bows of Brent District Health Authority, who were to decide on the closure a few days later, and a preparation to defend the hospital and its elderly patients if the DHA voted to axe it.

A staff committee immediately took control, putting a 24-hour picket on the hospital gate, and drawing up a list — with a rogue's gallery of "mug shot" photographs — of the senior management and administrators now barred from the premises.

Under this new "workers' control", the care of patients is continuing as normal; it is *management* who wish to disrupt this, uproot the hospital's long-stay patients, inconvenience relatives, and cut back the District's capacity to care for the elderly by shutting the hospital.

Brent management had made it clear that they wanted to close Neasden: but they could not agree amongst themselves on an explanation. While some argued that the closure was needed to cover the cost of this year's pay awards to nurses, others claimed that it would free extra cash to fund a new "resource unit".

In the event, management cobbled together only a primitive 3-page "consultative document" including plans to close 'C' ward at Neasden by Christmas, and the whole hospital by next summer.

For hardliners at October's District Health Authority meetings, this was quite enough: but many DHA members were dissatisfied, and after an 8-8 split, the closure was eventually ratified only by the casting vote of the government-appointed chair.

The reality is that the Neasden closure is one of the consequences of a brutal £2m cut in Brent's health spending this year, and a continuing rundown of the District as part of the 10-year plan of the NW Thames region.

By JOHN LISTER



In other Districts, hospital occupations have been successful in preventing closures: Hayes Cottage and Northwood & Pinner hospitals in London, and Rivermead in Oxford have been saved, while many more have been kept open — and patients defended — long after the planned closure date.

The Neasden occupation, officially

backed by NUPE and COHSE, has excellent support from the local community: it is a real chance to hit back against cuts and closures that are hitting health services across London.

The occupation could well be a long one: campaigners are urging health workers and supporters to volunteer for regular duties on the picket rota.

Biggest victory against privatisation

A MAJOR victory against the privatisation of ancillary services in the NHS has been notched up by health workers in Sunderland.

Determined, escalating strike action across the District has forced the District Health Authority to declare that it will put no more services out to competitive tender unless they are given a legally binding instruction from Social Services Secretary Norman Fowler. So far the Tories have been able to impose their privatisation policies on health authorities without getting their hands dirty in this way: it is open to doubt whether Fowler will now issue a

formal instruction.

The demand that all DHAs make similar demands of the government before moving ahead with further privatisation could potentially halt the whole process of sackings, wage-cutting and profiteering by private firms. Health workers in many areas could be mobilised on this issue as a part of the fight to combat private firms and job-cutting "in-house" contracts.

What has been described as an "uneasy peace" has now been established in Sunderland, following the decision of the DHA to suspend the tendering process.

This surrender came in the wake of an escalation of industrial action by health unions in the district, which had been trig-

gered by the unilateral action of the DHA Chair in overruling an in-house tender, to award the contract for cleaning community clinics to the private firm ICC. The action, spreading beyond the 50 community cleaners to involve up to 2,000 workers, culminated in a week-long strike which forced the authority to back down.

At the October DHA meeting, a resolution was passed which called for the suspension of competitive tendering nationally, pending a full independent inquiry into the effects of privatisation. This inquiry would include looking at the impact on industrial relations, the truth behind the much talked-about "savings", and the general effect on services.

And though the contract which sparked off the original dispute remains in the hands of ICC, those domestic staff who do

not find employment with the company have been promised redeployment to NHS jobs elsewhere in the District: there is even a promise to cover their extra travel expenses!

Fowler must now either issue an unprecedented legally-binding instruction that the DHA must privatise, or leave the DHA to get on with the business of providing services.

The Sunderland victory is also important in that it vindicates all those who argued for the spreading and escalation of local strikes against privatisation. Though the NUPE bureaucracy has successfully isolated and stamped out the courageous 18-month strike at Barking Hospital and the 7 month strike at Scarsdale Hospital, Chesterfield, local officials of NUPE and COHSE in Sunderland played a positive

role in building and spreading the Sunderland strike.

With the struggle against contractors OCS still going strong at Addenbrookes Hospital, Cambridge, after 13 months, moves to establish informal links between hospital strikes and militant health workers are continuing. A meeting of the ad-hoc National Action Committee, launched last July with the support of the Barking strikers, is scheduled for Saturday, November 30 at Whiston Hospital, Prescot, Merseyside.

Futher details from Sylvia Burtin, Chair of the Addenbrookes Strike Committee, c/o 31, Thorleys Rd, Cambridge.

Labour women: join the fight for socialism!

By JENNY FISHER

LABOUR women have been hard done by in most of the analyses and assessments written about Labour Party annual conference: apart from mentioning the defeat of the "conscience clause", we've been largely ignored at the expense of coverage of other issues.

Perhaps this is not altogether surprising, as, compared with some of the other campaigning groups at Bournemouth, Labour women were much less visible than we have been before, or, at least, we were not in the same space.

Certainly, the defeat of the "conscience clause" is a big victory. It's a major step forward for all women,



particularly working class women who depend on the NHS and can't buy themselves out of the system, that the Labour Party has now committed itself to the right to abortion being Party policy, and being carried out. It's also a big gain in terms of Party democracy, part of the long battle to push Labour office-holders to understand that they are elected to implement Party policy, not to further their own preferences and careers.

The victory in the Labour Party would have been impossible without the strength of the women's movement: the women's movement who have pushed "a woman's right to choose", and the women's movement's strength as seen in the miners' strike, which provided an increased willingness on the part of some sections of the labour movement to take women seriously.

But how far did the victory come from the strength of women *organised* in the Labour Party?

For some years now, socialist women in the Labour Party have worked together in the Labour Women's Action Committee to discuss priorities, issues, and organise to take on the overwhelmingly male weight of the Party and

trade unions. Although it's only relatively recently that LWAC has begun to develop a life "at the grass roots", even before that it was important and influential. Many women found that LWAC-arranged get-togethers and meetings at Conferences were the only opportunity they had to find out what was going on, to try out their ideas, and to gain strength for the next year's battle; and this has helped to strengthen women, and support for women's "issues", in constituency Labour Parties.

Yet the focus of the Labour Women's Action Committee has been changing.

LWAC has always pushed constitutional change as not *more important* than policy reform, but as the priority of the women's organisation. The argument is a sound one: while women have no power in the Labour Party decision-making process, our interests and needs will be very hard to fight for. We need constitutional reform, so that the women's organisations have power (e.g. the annual Women's Conference should elect the five women's representatives to the National Executive Committee), and so that we can cut through the overwhelming male dominance of the real decision-making process (the above reform, and also the proposal to send five resolutions to Annual Conference from the Women's Conference, and have them discussed).

But the campaign for constitutional reform could be handled in two ways. To be successful, it had to grasp the fundamentally revolutionary nature



Labour Campaign for Lesbian and Gay Rights:
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Membership Secretary,
17, Osborne Rd,
Southville,
BRISTOL BS3 1PR.

of those constitutional changes. In demanding power in decision-making, women were mounting a challenge not only to the male dominance of the Labour Party, but also to the *political status quo*.

There is a real fight to make Labour Party men take women seriously; but there's also a fight to change that status quo. The Labour Party leaders are not just clamping down on women out of pure, malicious sexism, though there's plenty of that about. They are determined to fend off any challenge by any section of the working class which threatens to expose the workings of the capitalist system.

For Labour women would do just that. As soon as we got near any power, the demands that are passed with complete understanding at Women's Conference would be put forward on the floor of Annual Conference, with more women delegates to vote for them, represented by women on the NEC who would constantly push for them to be implemented.

Take that example of "a woman's right to choose". A commitment to free abortion on demand is meaningless unless health spending is increased. But the Labour leadership won't even give a commitment to restore the cuts in the NHS, let alone increase spending. The commitment to a woman's right to choose goes further anyway: requiring further spending on education, on contraception provision, on clinics, on screening, on support for single mothers, on housing, changes in employment... well, the list is endless really.

So it's important that women understand just how much they are demanding; exactly what's at stake; and why the Labour leadership is putting up such a fight against us.

Either the battle is fought in that way, taking on those issues; or, the other option, is to scale down the demands and their substance, and go for winning concessions by convincing those who have to make them that they don't really have that much to fear.

And this is the road that Labour women are in danger of going down: a road that *could* win us — again — a few paper, token victories in the future, but would lose us all the substance we're fighting for.

Where were Labour women at Bournemouth? Some of us were on the floor of conference, fighting with women in the Black Sections campaign, who are battling for demands which are just as revolutionary, and just as open to meaningless, empty fudging (such as affiliation as a society, rather than full rights for Black Sections), and who saw their vote treble. Some of us were confined to standing still with admiration, unable to keep up with sisters working for lesbian and gay rights as they zipped around, convinced whole trade union delegations to support "no hoper cause number one", made proud speeches to Conference, and — in



Conference terms — began and successfully concluded the first round of their campaign in just one year!

Meanwhile, the "official" Labour Women's organisation was handing out publicity for a revue.

I'll accept allegations of undue personal hostility towards revues, and they may well swell the coffers; but nonetheless, they do ally our movement with the "official" Labour Party. Revues are things you read about in the official Conference diary — including the WAC revue, now that it has taken to the bizarre idea of swallowing its previous political principles enough at the idea of a bit of free publicity to register.

Revue have a cosy, "business as usual" air about them: where has all our anger gone? Our militancy? Our visibility?

We must learn the lessons of the Women Against Pit Closures movement. After all that women put into the miners' strike — which does not need repeating here — you'd have thought the NUM would have granted the quite reasonable, barely radical request for affiliation? No. And not just because of an overdose of sexism.

Women Against Pit Closures represents to the NUM the same threat as Labour women do to the Labour Party leadership: not just the threat of being women, but the threat of the demands and the determination to succeed of working class women, of socialist women.

Women on the Steering Committee of WAPC put a very "reasonable" interpretation on the demand for affiliation: an observer at Conference, and the main gain of affiliation being presented as the possibility of participating in NUM Educational courses.

But this reasonableness was no more attractive to the die-hards of the

NUM than the more radical opportunities seen by other women, who looked to affiliation to be a continuance of women being recognised as having a rightful place within the concerns of the union, of being taken seriously.

Indeed, the NUM men who were won over to supporting WAPC's right for affiliation were those who had been convinced of the need to take women seriously — convinced by the fact that women had sustained the strike; those who applauded women for organising as women and saw women as they class allies they are; those who were prepared to recognise that women had in many, many places led the strike.

We do ourselves no service by conceding on the scope of our demands, or not fighting angrily and truthfully for our full rights to play an equal and a leading part in the struggle for socialism.

There are many women who play a part in the Labour Women's Action Committee who know this, and who are disturbed at the political accommodation carried out in WAC's name. The WAC AGM, postponed from December, and now to be held in January, will see the debate come out. Hopefully, it will also see WAC turning back towards its natural allies in the Labour Party: sisters fighting for Black rights and for Lesbian rights, and not continuing to move away from them. Hopefully it will see as its natural allies those who recognised women's role in the miners' strike, and join with mining community women and others in fighting for continued defence of the miners against Tory attacks. And hopefully it will renounce any temporary faith it may have had in the upholders of the system that oppresses us all; and stop taking the fight forward on their terms.

Complete the break from Healyism!

IN any organisation which devoted any attention at all to the struggle against women's oppression it would have been impossible. But the sensational expulsion of the Workers Revolutionary Party's former General Secretary Gerry Healy for the systematic rape and sexual abuse of dozens of women comrades lifted the lid on a Pandora's box of corruption, intimidation and political bankruptcy.

Healy's expulsion — followed by 200 of his most servile acolytes — has left the majority of the WRP in a ferment of political discussion and a chaos of inquiries into the party's organisational regime. Few, if any, of the old leadership come out with clean hands after two decades of Healy's dictatorial rule, buttressed by rhetoric and "theoretical" arguments put forward by such figures as Mike Banda and Cliff Slaughter.

Drawing the lessons of this eleven year period, and of the current split, Socialist Viewpoint is printing an open letter, written to WRP members by some of those comrades bureaucratically expelled from the WRP in 1974, for raising political differences on the very questions which must now be confronted if that Party is to complete its break from Healyism and move in the direction of Marxism.

We also reprint here an abridged version of the Introduction to the second edition of the Battle for Trotskyism, the book on the 1974 expulsions. The text offers an outline of WRP politics over the period up to 1979, which may not be familiar to many readers, and explains, for those currently re-examining their politics, how the main lines of Healy's more recent politics took shape.



An Open Letter to WRP members following the expulsion of Gerry Healy.

Dear Comrades,

As former WRP members expelled by Gerry Healy in 1974, we are by no means surprised by the corruption and violence uncovered in the present crisis and split within the Party. We are only surprised that the crisis has taken so many years to break.

We know that in the aftermath of Healy's expulsion, with so many political issues thrown into the melting pot, WRP members are forced to face a bewildering array of pro-

blems. We recognise that the present split, like our opposition in 1973-74, has its roots in political differences.

We could not accept Healy's constant predictions of cataclysmic economic crisis, or dire forecasts of imminent dictatorship: they proved ruinously disruptive to our work in the labour movement and we began to say so. Before we knew where we were, Healy had changed the constitution to remove the right to appeal to conference against expulsion — and we were being denounced as "anti-party elements", "Mensheviks" and "police agents".

As we looked more into the politics of the WRP leadership and the regime of the Group we found all the things which have emerged now — violence, corruption and abuse of women comrades. Central Committee member Tony Richardson was beaten personally by Healy in the (now infamous) flat.

When Kate Blakeney complained against this on the Central Committee, she was charged, suspended from membership and ejected from the meeting within 4 minutes!

When we asked for a control commission into the violence, Healy

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changed the terms of reference to an investigation into us. In the end the Control Commission recommendation was our expulsion from the movement.

When we saw the charge sheets it turned out we were being expelled for raising precisely the things for which Healy was recently expelled from the Group: violence, intimidation and corruption. We were said to have been "slandering the General Secretary"! We had in fact been very reluctant to raise these matters but we regarded it as a matter of principle to do so once we knew about them. But Healy used them against us. He said we could not argue politically and were resorting to slander. He is saying the same things now — only then the majority backed Healy.

Then, after we were expelled, he organised a "reregistration" throughout the WRP Western Area (where we all were). All those refusing to accept our expulsion were themselves expelled — including some who hardly knew us in London and Yorkshire. Some 200 were expelled all told.

Today's events completely vindicate the stand we took at that time. The violence, corruption and abuse of women comrades are Healy's politics. His opportunist antics on political issues flow out of that.

In 1974 we took up his political line in some detail — as can be seen in our account of the split in the book *The Battle for Trotskyism*, which we published at the time, and in *WRP leaders junk the old Trotskyism*, published later on, as well as many other articles and statements.

Today, we welcome the stand which has been belatedly taken against Healy, although much damage has been done to the Trotskyist movement by his continued activities over the past 10 years.

We welcome Healy's expulsion and the fact that his most mindless disciples have gone with him. But we have to say to WRP members that this is only the start. There is a terrible mess to be cleaned up. The grotesque practices of Healy are still doing damage to the Trotskyist movement, in the Fleet Street tabloids ever day.

The problem is compounded by the fact that WRP leaders like Mike Banda and Cliff Slaughter clearly knew what was going on, and condoned it over decades. They were enthusiastic supporters of Healy's political and organisational moves to expel us in 1974.



Goddali — suddenly selected for adulatory support in 1977

There must now be a full political accounting of the whole situation, and a full political self-criticism by those who have acted as Healy's theoretical mouthpiece over the years. The workers' movement has a right to know just how an organisation as small as the WRP and theoretically committed to fight Stalinism and reformist bureaucracies could create political and material conditions to spawn such a vicious, brutal, utrammelled bureaucracy in its own ranks.

WRP members must revise almost every assumption and position that has been handed down to them, and turn to Trotskyism. Their model must be the Bolshevik party, the Left Opposition and the early Fourth International, in which democracy was a central factor in preserving a healthy political leadership. As we pointed out in 1974 this means:

- Rejecting any cult of the individual, exclusive leadership cliques and any privileged positions for full-timers;

- As a guarantee of the accountability of the leadership and its scrutiny by membership at all levels, there must be full freedom of discussion within the Party, with the right to raise questions, and circulate and argue minority points of view, documents, resolutions and information.

- A necessary corollary from the right to argue minority points of view is the right to organise around these views, to form opposition tendencies and factions to develop and fight for these points of view — rights jealously defended in Lenin's Bolshevik Party and in the statutes of the Fourth International.

- This means a categorical and principled rejection of violence and intimidation of any kind within the Marxist (and workers') movement. Violence if used should be directed at the class enemy, not comrades with differences.

- A healthy internal regime depends also on the development of new layers of independently-minded, educated cadre. This in turn demands that the activity of the movement in the class struggle must be geared to the human resources available, and orientated in such a way as to train comrades to play a leading role in the actual struggles of the labour movement: on this issue the connection between a healthy regime and healthy political line is made clear in the need to reject sterile activist propagandism.

On the political level, a host of

Still available

Copies of *The Battle for Trotskyism* and other literature on the WRP are available (£3 including post and packing) from Socialist Viewpoint's Bookstall, BCM Box 3956, London WC1N 3XX.

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questions must be confronted.

● Any real change on the Middle East calls for a serious analysis of the nature and historical development of the vicious regimes in Libya, Iraq, Iran, and Syria, each of which the WRP has from time to time defended, and a solid reappraisal of the politics of the Arafat wing of the PLO. The starting point must be the interests of the oppressed masses of the Middle East, and the fight for a strategy of permanent revolution, not Healy's convenient alliances with wealth and power.

● This reappraisal must also include a rejection of the positions of adaptation to the Stalinist leadership in Vietnam, the scandalous justification of the murders of the Vietnamese Trotskyists, and a reaffirmation of the need for political revolution against each of the Stalinist leadership internationally.

● The Healy experience has underlined the appalling backwardness of the WRP on the question of women's oppression, where not even the lessons of Lenin, Trotsky and the First Four Congresses of the Communist International have been incorporated into the theory or practice of the party: in fact the development of the women's liberation movements in the post-war period demand that Trotskyists go much further in outlining a perspective for that fight.

● The Jennings letter reveals another side of WRP backwardness — on the question of gay rights and gay liberation, with the party taking a more backward position than many reformist councils!



Trotsky

● The central issue of the relationship of Marxists to the British Labour Party must be faced in the light of the rejection of Healy's cock-eyed analysis of the period and the actual situation in 1985.

● The WRP's trade union work, which has been in a state of collapse since the 1974 expulsions, and which could only languish in the absence of any programme of transitional demands or perspective of serious intervention, has also suffered from gross opportunist adaptations.

● On the question of the Fourth International, WRP comrades must recognise that the "orthodox", "anti-Pabloite" International Committee has on Vietnam and the Middle East adopted far worse political positions than even Pablo himself. The only real comparison with WRP adaptations to Khomeini and Arafat is the Castroite line of the American SWP — who have gone the whole hog, rejected Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution, and effectively

repudiated the call for political revolution. Far from lecturing the rest of the crisis-ridden Trotskyist movement, or denouncing them lock, stock and barrel as "revisionists", WRP members (and IC sections) must now confront the actual situation and political degeneration of the movement as a whole, of which the WRP is a part! The unresolved political problems of the 1953 split in the Fourth International, the Cuban revolution, and the whole post-war crisis of the FI cannot be wished away or ignored: they must be politically confronted if a revolutionary International is to be built.

We cannot offer ready answers to all these questions. But we have addressed many of them to some extent since our expulsions in 1974. We have carried out a continuing struggle in the labour movement for principle and programme. And we offer now to discuss all or any of these issues with WRP members who wish to carry forward the fight for Marxism despite the betrayals of Healy.

We are among the supporters of the magazine *Socialist Viewpoint*. We have survived intimidation, mass expulsions, and eleven years of calumny, provocations and abuse from Healy to continue the battle for Trotskyism. You can survive it, too, and still make a real contribution to the struggle for socialism, if you make a real break from past methods and policies.

Our views are summed up in *Battle for Trotskyism*, and other publications. Why not find out more?

Photo © The New York Times Magazine December 14, 1981

LIBYA

A 1981 Libya has the 10th anniversary of the 1971 Revolution. The magazine brought the 10th anniversary of the 1971 Revolution to the attention of the WRP's Congress in the 1980s.

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"The Workers Revolutionary Party has openly declared its political alliance with the revolutionary movements in the Arab world, Africa, Ireland and Latin America."

"These represent the continuation of Trotsky's struggle to resolve the crisis of leadership in the working class and build the world party of socialist revolution."

GADDAFI SPEAKS



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EIGHTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FIRST OF SEPTEMBER REVOLUTION



"Our Libyan Arab people on this date, the date of the eighth anniversary of the upsurge of the Great Revolution, stand with power in their hands, with wealth in their hands and with weapons in their hands..."



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The downhill path since 1974

Extract from 1979
Introduction to
Battle for Trotskyism

"The Battle for Trotskyism" was the chronicle of the 1974 expulsions. It was published in 1976 by what was then the Workers Socialist League. This extract is from the second (1979) edition. The WSL published a paper, "Socialist Press", from 1975-1981. For further details, contact Socialist Viewpoint.

WHEN the group of comrades who formed the Workers Socialist League were expelled from the WRP in December 1974 we predicted that the speed at which the WRP was degenerating would bring about its collapse or disintegration relatively quickly.

Indeed it seems certain that this would have been the case if the Healy leadership's subsequent opportunist turn to support for petty bourgeois and bourgeois Arab nationalist leaders had not provided an artificial and temporary stay of execution.

The reality is that even now, five years after our expulsion, the political degeneration is still working its way through into organisational crisis and disintegration. The last six months alone have seen at least two waves of expulsions from the WRP, which is only a tiny fraction of the size it was in 1974. The sales of its daily paper, *Newsline*, are clearly negligible: bundles of copies lie uncollected at main railway stations and the paper is unobtainable in many former WRP strongholds.

The scale of the crisis is such that even the WRP Political Committee has had to admit it publicly and take steps to cut back on the Party's extensive apparatus and the size of the paper. But these steps cannot stabilise a movement that has abandoned every shred of past principles and that retains the allegiance of its members only by the most fantastic and monstrous slander campaigns against its political opponents.



Mike Banda

Ours was not an opposition that simply reacted to this or that aspect of Healyism such as the total denial of democratic centralism within the WRP; the sectarian, the absence of international perspective; or the cavalier attitude towards the history of the Trotskyist movement. We set out from the outset to confront Healy's *method* and to contrast it to that spelled out in the approach of the Transitional Programme. We focussed on the necessity for a *programme* capable of mobilising workers in struggle in such a way as to lead them to grasp the bankruptcy of their reformist and Stalinist leaders and the need for the revolutionary seizure of power.

The Introduction to the first (February 1976) edition of *Battle for Trotskyism* points to the obvious weaknesses that were contained in our early documents — weaknesses that flowed from the conditions in which they were written, the initially limited purposes they were intended to serve, and the newness of the problems they confront. Yet they represent the most developed opposition yet to emerge from the ranks of the SLL/WRP.

Healy is acutely aware of this. Today the pages of *Newsline* are regularly being filled once more with foul slanders against the Workers Socialist League and our members. We see this as a sign of desperate weakness. Healy recognises us as a threat to which he has no political answer. So he sets out at all costs to wall off members and ex-members of the IC from any objective assessment of our positions and our record in practice.

As the Third Document — a detailed account of our expulsions — shows, it was our ready acceptance of a challenge by Healy to develop a *second* document taking up the questions he posed, that decided him to prepare our expulsions *before* the WRP conference that was supposedly to debate our positions.

In a bid to prevent us winning a broader base of support we were framed up on organisational charges, expelled a week before the conference, and vilified in our absence by the leadership from the conference platform. Even the notional democratic rights laid down by the WRP constitution were violated.

Today's crisis in the WRP however finds Healy more desperate than ever — and the slanders more vitriolic.

The most disgusting slanders to date have been aimed at *Socialist Press* editor John Lister. A former full-time area organiser for the WRP, Lister is now cynically branded by *Newsline* as an FBI agent!

A *Newsline* weekend supplement, dated May 5 1979, and entitled "Security and the Fourth International", carried three articles. The introduction stated:

"The Newsline weekend supplement today publishes three articles on the FBI-CIA spy network of the late Joseph Hansen, double agent and long-time leader of the United States revisionist Socialist Workers Party..."

Today we publish vital new chapters in the investigation showing the world-wide tentacles of Hansen's network: in Latin America, Australia and Britain."

The third of these articles, on Britain, is entitled "John Lister: the FBI Oxford Attorney".

Naturally the article offered not a shred of proof to connect Lister in any way whatever with the FBI: but, more abysmally still, it could not even fabricate anything to connect Lister with Hansen either! Far from being one of the "world-wide tentacles of Hansen's network", Lister had never so much as met, spoken with or received communication from Hansen in any shape or form. Indeed the nearest thing to a link between the two is the fact that as a national organiser for the WSL Lister last year sent Hansen a copy of a letter (since published) pressing the case for the circulation of the WSL document "The Poisoned Well". Hansen did not reply!

The WRP case therefore had to be flimsy. But in fact it hung on an outright and conscious *lie*. *Newsline* claims that Lister wrote in *Socialist Press* an article that sup-

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ported the SWP's proposal for a financial settlement to their five year \$40 million lawsuit against the FBI. The anonymous WRP hack speculates that the reason for this is:

"perhaps, because the FBI leaders of the SWP have promised Lister himself a cut of the proceeds if and when the blood money is received."

But of course Lister's article did not support — but positively *denounced* — the SWP's proposal for a financial settlement! It went on to *attack* the way in which the SWP had failed to take the lessons of its court action against the FBI into the US trade union and labour movement!

Thus one deliberate and ludicrous *Newsline* lie becomes for Healy the basis for accusing the editor of *Socialist Press* of being an FBI agent! What value, then, are we to place on the "investigation" that supposedly backs the WRP's more extravagant and voluminous reams of accusations against Joseph Hansen and George Novack? The WRP leaders have adopted the time-honoured Stalinist method of using slander to wall off their members from discussion with political opponents. In case anyone should doubt this, *Newsline* itself has admitted its intentions by ending an article entitled "Thornett's Clique" (May 16) with the words:

"Workers and youth must be on guard against this group and have nothing whatsoever to do with it. You don't know who you will be talking to or where he will turn up next." (emphasis added)

This same article significantly refers to some extent to the 1974 expulsions. In doing so it reveals that Healy has continued to embroider on the WRP's original lying account of events.

The Third Document goes into the original fabrication of a "quote" from Alan Thornett which supposedly let slip our "real" position on the Labour Government. The statement was allegedly made at a WRP Central Committee meeting on September 14, 1974, before the First Document was produced. Cliff Slaughter claimed that Thornett had said that the working class would come into conflict with capitalism "through the Labour Government".

As the Third Document points out:

"It is never mentioned, of course, that Thornett immediately challenged the accuracy of it, or that no such position appeared in either of the two political documents he submitted, or that no such statement has ever appeared in *Socialist Press* or in any statements or literature put out by the WSL."

But, relying as ever on the receding memory of remaining WRP members, Healy has now developed the lie. It now reads:

"With Wilson back in Downing Street, the Thornett clique (I) put forward the utterly reactionary and anti-Marxist view that the strength of the mass movement will force the Wilson government to carry out anti-capitalist measures."

The WRP Central Committee overwhelmingly rejected Thornett's position as a complete capitulation to social democracy and the Labour and trade union bureaucracy.

History has vindicated the WRP!

History normally does "vindicate you" if you make it up to justify your actions as you go along. The whole account here is based on a lie, and designed to persuade

the reader that our opposition in the WRP was based on this fabricated position. We invite readers to see the truth for themselves in *Battle for Trotskyism*.

On Social Democracy, the First Document, for instance, produced in November 1974, states on page 3:

"It is indisputable of course that this Labour Government will betray and will open the door to reaction."

And on page 21:

"This Labour Government will seek by every means available to it to betray those workers who voted it into office. Our task is to warn continuously of this. Social Democracy is the principle agency of the ruling class within the working class."

History, we think, has vindicated us.

Events since 1974

The Second Document makes the important point that sectarianism always has "its opposite contained within it — that of slides into opportunism" (pages 88-9). It quotes the 1974 examples of the WRP's failure to call for the building of Trotskyist parties for political revolution in North Vietnam or China. And it examines the praise in *Workers Press* for Yassir Arafat's appearance at the United Nations — imperialism's "thieves kitchen" — which was described as a "serious blow to US-Israeli imperialism." It shows the WRP's switch of position from criticism of Arafat to uncritical support for him.

The WRP has slavishly defended every action and manoeuvre carried out by these anti-communist despots. Even the infamous Iraqi Ba'athist regime's execution and torture of Communist Party members, students and trade unionists has been publicly endorsed by *Newsline*. Ba'athist attacks on the oppressed Kurdish minority are defended — by branding the Kurdish people as "CIA agents". The WRP's previous correct support for the historic Kurdish liberation struggle has been obliterated from the record. Instead Ba'athist speakers are leted at WRP conferences, and *Newsline* talks of the "socialist transformation" of Iraq.

Libyan bonapartist dictator Gaddafi — whose people are "free" to do anything but organise independently in unions, political parties or genuine workers' and peasants' councils — is promoted in *Newsline*, his speeches reprinted uncritically, and his brazen anti-communism ignored.

Newsline's bootlicking subservience has now extended to include Ayatollah Khomeini, whose moves to organise the reconstitution of the Shah's shattered army, endorsement of the wholesale murder of gays, attacks on the rights of Iranian women, and attempt militarily to crush liberation struggles by national minorities are all defended by the WRP. They accuse anyone opposing Khomeini's reactionary policies of being CIA inspired.

And posthumous WRP seal of approval was even given to dead Algerian dictator Boumedienne, whose right wing positions were notorious.

The Workers' Socialist League's position on Khomeini has been the principled one of critically supporting him in his calls for the downfall of the Shah, while warning that Khomeini offers no political solution to the problems of the Iranian masses, which can be resolved only through social revolution.

But when we attacked the Khomeini/Bazargan government's repression

of women's rights, *Newsline* replied:

"And now to compound the confusion — and complete the monstrous campaign of slander and misrepresentation — the man who symbolised the revolutionary aspirations of the Iranian people and their struggle against the Shah's despotism, Ayatollah Khomeini, is condemned as a 'religious bigot'." (*Newsline*, 10:4:79).

For the WRP, therefore, the Iranian revolution is completed with the emergence of the present bourgeois nationalist government! This stand, echoing Healy's defence of the murder of CP members by the Iraqi Ba'athists would, if applied in 1926-7 in China have placed the WRP leaders to the right of Stalin, forcing them to defend the mass murder of Chinese CP members by Chiang Kai Shek's "anti-imperialist" bourgeois nationalist forces. Even Stalin felt obliged to seek out "left" elements within Chiang's Kuomintang!

Indeed the WRP's abandonment of the Trotskyist theory of Permanent Revolution is so brazen that it just has to be deliberate and conscious. It flies in the face of a formally correct article on the Iranian revolution in the WRP's own "theoretical" journal *Labour Review* published as late as December 1978. That states:

"Ranged against world imperialism, Stalinism and the Shah's dictatorial military-police state, stand the revolutionary masses of Iran. All they lack is conscious leadership. The 'democratic' programme of the bourgeois National Front and the Moslem religious leaders [emphasis added] is no answer to the social and economic problems facing the masses of Iran. The Tudeh (Stalinist) Party of Iran meanwhile strives might and main to limit the workers and peasants to that programme."

The Tudeh Stalinists will no doubt be relieved to hear they now have the unsolicited assistance of the WRP in this line of class betrayal. But the *Labour Review* article suggested a very different line:

"What is required in Iran, however, is the construction of a party based on the theories of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky. In his theory of the permanent revolution, Trotsky insisted that in countries with a belated bourgeois development, especially the colonial and semi-colonial countries, democracy and national emancipation could be achieved only through the dictatorship of the proletariat, with the working class leading the peasant masses..."

... this alliance [between the working class and peasantry] could be forged only through an irreconcilable struggle against the national-liberal bourgeoisie ... the democratic revolution grows over directly into the socialist revolution." (p408)

By April 1979, a mere four months after this formally correct defence of permanent revolution, Khomeini's support for the PLO heralded a fresh about-face by the WRP to complete support for the Islamic leader and a refusal to criticise his moves to suppress democratic rights. Indeed history has vindicated the formal orthodoxy of the WRP last December and refuted the opportunist line of the WRP in April 1979, as Khomeini has proved that his Islamic capitalist regime is incapable of offering democratic rights to the Iranian masses.

Small wonder that the IC, for all its press



WRP helped fuel TGWU witch-hunt against Trotskyists.

coverage of the area, has no sections in the Middle East. The dropping of the theory of permanent revolution indicates that they do not believe Trotskyist parties to be necessary for the struggles of the masses; and such parties would only be an embarrassment to the WRP's cross-class, popular frontist strategy of "alliances with the national liberation movements".

Such alliances mean in practice throwing the columns of *Newsline* open for the demagogic "anti-imperialist" statements of Arab bourgeois governments and governing parties, coupled with periodic official visits by Healy or Vanessa Redgrave to reactionary Sheikdoms to collect donations to the *Newsline's* libel fund or to sell feudal rulers exclusive government rights on the WRP film "The Palestinian".

But such opportunism in relation to Middle East regimes is reflected also in the WRP's adaptation to Vietnamese Stalinism. Shortly after the expulsion of the 1974 opposition, the WRP disgraced itself by effectively defending the murder of the Vietnamese Trotskyists by Ho Chi Minh's Stalinist forces in the post-war period, and awarding the Stalinists the credentials of having carried out a consistent revolutionary line. This has now extended into WRP endorsement for the Vietnamese bureaucracy's invasion of Cambodia.

The Workers' Socialist League, in contrast, has put forward a consistent line of exposing the counter-revolutionary role of Stalinism and advocating demands on which workers can move into struggle for their independent interests and challenge the bureaucracy.

The WRP in Britain

Healy's opportunism has not been restricted to the international level. It has coloured every aspect of the WRP's prac-

tice in the British labour movement.

In the Introduction to the 1976 first edition [of *Battle for Trotskyism*] we referred to the role of WRP Central Committee member Tom White in entering a class collaborationist "workers' participation" committee at British Leyland's Cowley plant.

White's hell-for-leather degeneration has since led him to resign from his position on the Committee of the TGWU 5/293 Branch in the plant at the height of a right wing anti-Trotskyist witch-hunt by the TGWU bureaucracy. In his resignation letter, handed to the bureaucracy, White declared that the WSL members and supporters — who faced recommended punishment including expulsion from the union — were *guilty* of the trumped up charges levelled at them by local union officials.

The Cowley Plant is (with the exception of Equity!) the one section of the trade union movement where the WRP still hold a leading position.

White's opportunism therefore provides a good means of comparing the practical record of the WRP to that of the WSL.

Leyland has been the test-bed for the specific method and form of attack adopted by successive Labour governments.

"Participation" committees — joint union/management bodies — were formed as part of this strategic attack. Their aim was to suck convenors and stewards into arguing that there was a joint interest between workers and management, and pressing for sacrifices on the shop floor to "save the company".

While Tom White willingly cooperated in this new set-up and went into participation, the Workers Socialist League and its supporters fought tooth and nail against it at every stage. Under our leadership the

TGWU Branch fought all the way for the independent class interests of the workers, and struggled to expose those that collaborated with management. For this, and the fact that our members and supporters fought against workers being sacked, and for wage demands that would defend living standards, we have been continuously under attack from the TGWU bureaucracy.

We challenge Healy to give an account of anything White has done to fight the TGWU witch-hunters or to mobilise workers against attacks by Leyland management during the last five years.

It is easy to avoid attacks from the bureaucracy — if you follow White's example and keep your head down while the management moves into attack conditions and union rights. But while the WRP snipes at us from the right, the workers of Cowley have shown their confidence in the policies we have fought for in the trade unions. And skilled workers and toolmakers in British Leyland have witnessed the bureaucratic repression that is heaped by union leaders on any section that attempts to stand up for its independent interests.

For the WRP, the class struggle has been reduced to an occasion for superficial or uncritical comment in *Newsline* and occasional expeditions to picket lines with exhortations to "join the revolutionary party". The maximum slogans of its journalistic coverage in fact cover an abandonment of workers to the minimum programme of the trade union bureaucracy and spontaneous trade union militancy.

In other words every aspect of the WRP's practical record in the struggle vindicates the warnings and analysis presented in 1974 in Alan Thornett's First Document. The WRP for all its talk of "bringing down" the Labour Government has played no role in the real struggle against it.

The WRP continues to ignore the necessity for such work. Healy's blend of sectarianism and opportunism could be clearly seen in the General Election. Despite the dwindling size of the WRP, the Party made the grandiose gesture of standing *six times* as many candidates as in 1974 — thus getting five minutes on television. Few of the 60 candidates were backed by any local organisation, or carried out any real campaign in the election. The television broadcast was Healy's attempt to jump over the lack of numbers, while posing as "the" party of the left.

But what did the broadcast actually say? It included no attacks on the union bureaucracy. It offered no analysis of Stalinism. It failed to mention Trotskyism or the Fourth International.

And while correctly defending national liberation movements, the perspective was totally national in character and abstract in content. In this way the maximum-minimum election programme attacked in Alan Thornett's First Document lives on today in an even more degenerate WRP.

After five years of slanders, lies and evasions, we do not expect any answer from Healy and the WRP leadership to the points we raise.

But we do hope that members and ex-members of the WRP who are appalled by the politics and the actions of the Healy leadership study the material put forward, take the decision to break from Healyism, and join us in the battle for Trotskyism.

June 1979

Working to co-ordinate the hard left

By JENNY FISHER

IT's not all gloom and doom. While the casual reader of the bourgeois press might think that all the left is doing is splitting apart and clogging up the bookstalls with yet more new magazines, one initiative aimed at uniting the left — at least in action — has quietly been plugging away at what could seem an impossible task for the last few months.

After an initial meeting earlier this year, Labour Left Co-ordination was formed to bring together the supporters of various newspapers, magazines, campaigns and pressure groups on the left of the labour movement. Our first "outing" was at Labour Party Conference in Bournemouth; and was the fruit of weeks of the careful planning necessary to mount such a joint initiative.

In Bournemouth, Labour Left Co-ordination produced a broadsheet handed out to delegates at the beginning of the Conference. It contained articles from the various campaigns involved, and showed delegates and visitors the issues which the left felt it was important to fight for.

Given that LLC brings together such different kind of groups, it is virtually impossible to present a common detailed programme which all the participants can endorse. The international campaigns (Labour Movement Campaign for Palestine, Labour Committee on Ireland, Labour Women for Ireland), for example, tend not to have policy on Economic Strategy, or British membership of NATO. But we were able to include in the broadsheet, and in advance publicity, appeals for resistance to the witch-hunt and any watering down of mandatory reselection; and in favour of positive discrimination, and the demands put forward by the campaigns for Black Sections, Lesbian and Gay rights, and Women's rights.

Labour Left Co-ordination ended the week with a fringe meeting. Like most others in Bournemouth, it was not easily accessible, but over 100 visitors and delegates came. For many, it was the first real chance they'd had to discuss the need to organise the left, and begin to debate



Eric Heffer joined the LLC platform after Kinnock's speech.

tactics. Platform speakers were Dianne Abbott, and Eric Heffer, and over twenty people spoke from the floor, which must have been a record at a Conference where fringe meeting platforms seemed even fuller than usual.

Labour Left Co-ordination was also able to co-operate in the publication of a joint daily bulletin at Conference. This was a very successful venture: as well as being a breakthrough in terms of left co-operation, and in terms of cutting down the amount of paper handed out to bemused delegates, it managed to act as the focal point for many campaigns to report on events during Conference, as well as providing guidance for delegates.

After Bournemouth, Labour Left Co-ordination faces the task of consolidating its activities, and not falling into the trap of being nothing but a left talking shop in between Labour Party Conferences.

A start has been made to turn out towards workers fighting the Tories by supporting the National Miners' Amnesty Campaign, and by inviting the Socialist Teachers' Alliance to talk to our next meeting with a view to working out some possible future co-operation.

LLC is taking seriously the task of co-ordinating a serious fightback on Labour Party policies. A major discussion on economic policy is being held at the next meeting, in the hope that we can agree on at least some broad principles to fight for in the Labour Party. Positive

discrimination and the specially oppressed have not been forgotten, with plans being made for a major discussion, led by the campaigns concerned, early in the New Year. LLC has, in the meantime, written to the press about racist attacks, and also to the London Region Labour Party (as the Labour Party Region where some of the most serious recent attacks have taken place) urging action.

On the witch-hunt, LLC has set up a sub-committee to co-ordinate information on all kinds of witch-hunts and campaigns against them.

Another major task is getting out of London, into the Regions, and promoting discussion on organising the left. As well as giving the chance to debate tactics, etc., this is very important to cut down the isolation that is still felt by the left in some areas. Plans are being made for meetings at Regional Labour Party Conferences; and left caucuses, etc., are encouraged to ask for speakers from LLC to attend their meetings.

As delegates left Bournemouth in October, there was a definite mood that in the face of the Labour Party leadership onslaught from the platform, local left caucuses must be organised. These can be local "Labour Lefts", local "Campaign Groups", local "Briefing Groups", or whatever: the main need is to get meeting, discussing and organised to face the tasks ahead.

Contact Labour Left Co-ordination at 57, Lofting Road, London N1.

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